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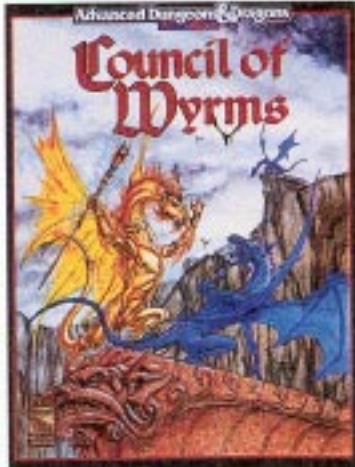
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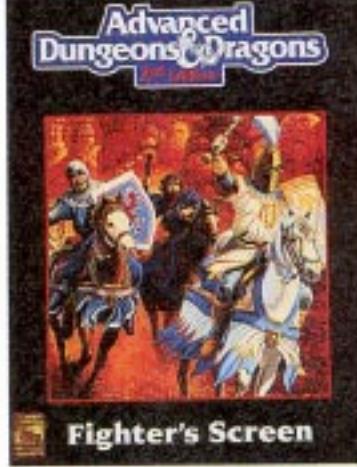
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# Contents

## SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

### Discover Surprising Treasures

9

Always examine treasure — with caution.

10

Big-League Magic — Chris Osbourne

Handle AD&D® game artifacts with care.

17

Bazaar of the Bizarre — Steve Stewart

Add these Celtic magical items to your campaign.

24

Paper Prosperity — Lew Wolkoff

Enrich your game with treasures of paper.

30

Trifling Treasures — Halina Adamski

Every hoard need not be composed of boring old cash.

## FICTION

96

The Lady of Roch Shan — Jo Shannon Cochran

"Hold the sunbeam, hold the sea, chain the zephyr,  
but do not chain me."

## REVIEWS

50

Role-playing Reviews — Rick Swan

The planes: Reality isn't what it used to be.

59

Eye of the Monitor — Sandy Petersen

Is there a relationship between games and violence?

64

The Role of Books — John C. Bunnell

Learn of tales involving Norse gods, seven Time Lords, and the Great Detective.

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## FEATURES

- 8** **First Quest** — David "Zeb" Cook  
 Zeb reveals why editors are evil and why he's older than dirt.
- 40** **The Magic of Karameikos** — Jeff Grubb  
 Joshuan Gallidox returns with information on the Karameikan School of Magecraft.
- 56** **The Game Wizards** — James M. Ward  
 Get the lowdown on the SPELLFIRE™ card game—including a list of all the cards.
- 68** **Sage Advice** — Skip Williams  
 This month, our sage discusses magical effects and undead in the AD&D game.
- 72** **Gunnar Thorson** — Manui & Adams  
 The plot thickens for our *Viking noir* detective.
- 74** **The Dragon Sage** — Bill Slavicsek  
 A new kit you can use with COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ dragon PCs.
- 80** **Rumblings** — The staff  
 Catch up on the latest happenings in the gaming industry.
- 83** **"There's a Rum Do About, Old Chap"** — Spike Y. Jones  
 Plant these adventure seeds in your *Faerie, Queen, and Country* game campaign.
- 88** **Great Responsibilities** — Alexander Teitz  
 Superheroes should take an active role in the community.
- 92** **Essential Villainy** — Chris Avellone  
 Every supervillain needs ambition, motives, and style.

## DEPARTMENTS

<b>4 Letters</b>	<b>103 Libram X</b>
<b>6 Editorial</b>	<b>106 Dragonmirth</b>
<b>36 Convention Calendar</b>	<b>108 Gamers Guide</b>
<b>46 Forum</b>	<b>120 TSR Previews</b>

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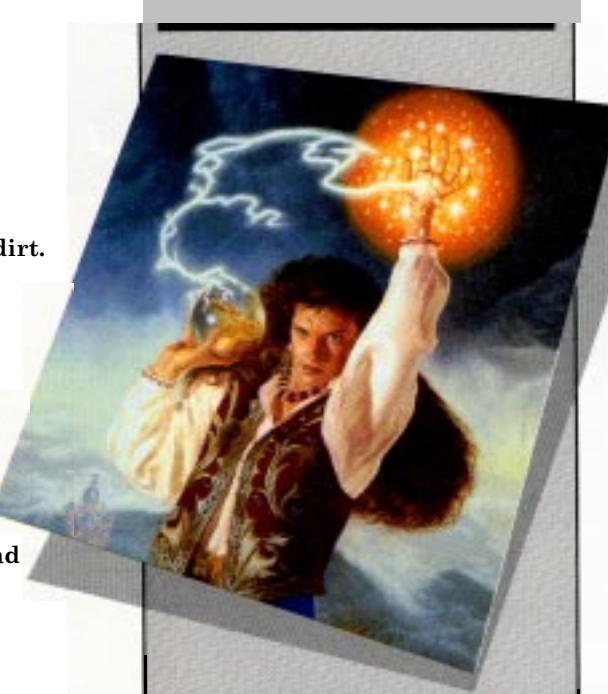
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## COVER

Artist Don Clavette says he doesn't have a particular title for this issue's splendid cover painting. He does say that his sister posed for it as she has for some of Don's other works, but this is the first time she'll actually appear on a cover. Don hopes she'll be thrilled. We're glad to be of service to both Clavette siblings.

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# Letters

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

## Errata, etc.

*Below is a collection of corrections, clarifications, and sundry other bits of business that have collected in my office over the last few months. We apologize for any confusion or inconvenience these errors may have caused. (Editor, editor, angst angst!) In order to publish as much as possible, individual entries have been edited. We'll start with a letter from TSR designer Bill Slavicsek.*

Dale

Dear Dragon,

Here are a few quick corrections for those of you who've picked up a copy of the new AD&D® game COUNCIL OF WYRMSTM boxed set:

First, on the "Dragon Size Chart," a line of text was inadvertently left off the scroll in the bottom right-hand corner. The missing text reads: "All dragons shown at juvenile age category (4) for size comparison. Silver dragon also shown as hatchling (1) and great wyrm (12) ages."

Second, in Book One: Rules, racial ability adjustments should be made after you roll to determine your dragon PC's characteristics, but before consulting Table One: Racial Ability Adjustments. Roll the dice, make the appropriate adjustments for the race of dragon you've chosen, then check the table to see if the numbers fall into the required ranges for that race.

Third, the map of the Council Aerie (page 26 of Book Two: Campaign) doesn't quite mesh with the text description. The challenge area is actually on a grassy plain south of the Aerie, with stone-pillar perches rising 500' into the sky around it. Also, the map compass on the Internal View map (page 27, same book) is wrong. The "N" should be moved to the current west directional point.

Dear Dragon,

I made a couple of boo-boos when I wrote "Part Dragon, All Hero" for DRAGON issue #206. The first is in Table 3 on page 24. The "Max." entry for the Deep Dragon should be "350 + 4d20" (not "100/115"), and the "Mid/Old/Ven." entry should be "175/233/350" (not "2d4").

Also, on Table 4 on page 25, ignore the "%" signs in the table. The modifiers are applied directly to the appropriate skill values; for

example, thief who'd normally have a 35% chance to pick pockets has a 30% chance ( $35 - 5 = 30$ ) if that thief is a half-gold PC. Finally, that should be a "-5" on the "Detect noise" chance for the half-silver ("H-Sv").

Roger E. Moore

*Steve Winter informs us that his issue #202 article, "Attack of the Little People" listed Alternative Armies' line of 15-mm fantasy figures as an "older line." In fact, the 15-mm figures were first released in 1992.*

*Also, Alternative Armies' address was not listed in the U.S., the figures are available through: The Armory, 4145 Amos Ave., Baltimore MD 21215. Alternative Armies itself can be reached at: Alternative Armies, Unit 6, Parkway Ct., Glaistead Parkway, Nottingham NG8 4GN, UNITED KINGDOM.*

*Allen Varney informs us via the Internet that the "TSR Previews" in issue #206 erroneously listed him as the designer of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®: PLANESCAPE™ Appendix. Allen is the editor for that project, not the writer.*

*Robert Meeske of Galesburg, Ill., wrote to say he enjoyed David Howery's "The People" Native-American campaign setting in issue #205, but he wondered why the tradition of "counting coup" was not mentioned. David's article was terrific, but it was looong. I had to cut material in a few places to make the article fit, and the counting coup section was one such area. Robert saves the day however, with this brief description: "Counting coup brought the most honor to warriors of Native American cultures. A coup entailed being able to touch an enemy and escape alive. The feathers of a Plains Indian's headdress and a Woodlands Indian's coup stick represented the coup the bearer has counted, and thus was a measure of a warrior's honor."*

*Several readers pointed out that, in issue #200's "Eye of the Monitor" column, the review of Westwood's Land of Lore game was accompanied not by photos of that game, but rather by shots of Westwood's Hand of Fate game.*

*Several sharp-eyed DRAGON readers also noted that Dalamar, the "dark elf" from the DRAGONLANCE® saga was mistakenly called a draw in Ed Greenwood's "The Wizard Three" in issue #200. In the future, we'll try to be sure to catch all of Ed's "Realms-speak."*

*Kyle Reagle of Ft. Huachuca, Ariz., caught an error in issue #204's "Creative Thinking" article. The Microkinesis devotion belongs to the Psychokinetic discipline, not the nonexistent Telekinetic discipline.*

*One reader (whose letter I lost—sorry) pointed out that the "Creatures That Time Forgot" article in Issue #204 neglected to include BUGHUNTERS® game damage statistics for two of the creatures listed—the opabinia and the yohoia. Careful reading of the entire article reveals that the damage ranges given are the same for both the AD&D game and the BUGHUNTERS game versions of the other creatures detailed in the article. Simply use the AD&D game damage ranges (1d6 and 1d8 x 2 respectively) if you want to use the two listed creatures in a BUGHUNTERS game.*



*And, finally, when I was conferring with Lester Smith on the above-mentioned BUGHUNTERS article, he was kind enough to pass along a letter from a fan of the game—whose name I can't read—that contained a few jokes pertaining to the BUGHUNTERS game. A few of my favorites are reproduced below.*

*Why did the synner (a BUGHUNTERS PC) cross the road?*

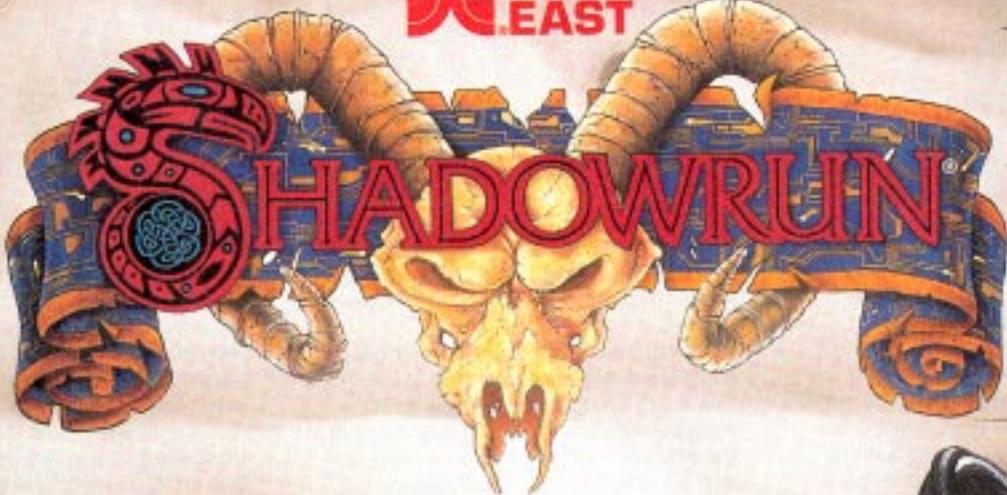
*Because there was better cover on that side.*

*What does a synner call an artificial womb? "Mom!"*

*How many synners does it take to change a light bulb?*

*Two—one to change the bulb and one to call in the air strike.*

**DATA EAST**



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# E d i t o r i a l

## On the road to adventure

Over the Memorial Day weekend (only a week ago as I write this), I took a car trip with a friend to New York City. Somewhere in the Poconos, the following thought occurred to me; many role-playing scenarios involve traveling to reach the site of the adventure. Yet, very often the GM will gloss over the trip saying, "Okay, the journey takes you seven days. When you arrive..." While this is fine in some cases, opportunities for adventure and role-playing are lost if this practice becomes standard operating procedure in a campaign. Sometimes, part of the adventure is in just getting to where you want to go. Heroic journeys aren't that easy. Look at Homer's *The Odyssey*. Poor Odysseus just wanted to go home after the Trojan War, but thanks to a few vengeful gods, it took him ten years!

There are several types of obstacles you can place in front of a traveling party, and the simplest may have actually happened to you (it certainly has to me.) The PCs get lost. They get lousy directions, use an inaccurate map, lose their guide due to injury or combat, or just make a wrong turn. The party has to backtrack, find where they went wrong, and make up for lost time. I know that getting lost is a frustrating experience, so this shouldn't happen too often unless the heroes get careless.

A second type of travel problem is the failure or breakdown of the characters' mode of transportation. As types of transport vary with the genre you're gaming in, the breakdowns also will vary, though the concept remains the same.

A few years back, I was playing in a campaign using GDW's TRAVELLER® rules. As our starship was attempting to escape from a dangerous space battle by entering jumpspace, it was struck by an enemy's weapon-in-the engines. Those of you familiar with the system know that this was a very bad thing. The PCs survived, though that was about the only good thing that could be said. The ship misjumped — a game term referring to the ship's destination. The ship didn't go where we wanted it to; but it went somewhere. The problem was that we had no idea where. We literally were lost in space. The ship's computer could not locate even one known star. On top of that, the PCs also experienced the worst cases of jump sickness ever. If you don't know what jump sickness is, don't ask. The point of this tale is that what could have been a

simple escape turned the campaign upside down. The current plot line was dropped as we tried to find a way back to known space.

A transportation failure in your campaign need not be that drastic to be effective. In a fantasy or other "low-tech" role-playing game (RPG), one or more of the PCs' mounts could throw a shoe, be injured, wander off in the night, or be taken by a predator. This is especially nasty if the party has pack animals. If one or more of them are lost, the PCs could lose valuable equipment or treasure. Similar troubles arise if the PCs' wagon shatters a wheel. ("How do the three of us carry 10,000 sp over 15 miles of mountain roads?") In modern-era and near-future RPGs, the spy PCs' getaway car could blow a tire, the superheroes' jet-rocket can suffer damage from a supervillain's attack, or the cyberpunk's motorcycle can be stolen. In far-future SF games, starships can get lost (as above), giant robots can overheat, and viruses can infect all types of navigation computers. (Fantasy-game GMs willing to bend a few rules could have "misjumps" occur with botched teleportation spells.) Whatever form the breakdown takes, the PCs are faced with acquiring some new means of transport. Suddenly, local repairmen, junkyard owners, and black-market parts dealers become important NPCs.

Another impediment to throw at traveling characters is an adverse environment. Nasty environments range from simple bad weather to natural disasters. PCs traveling on the ground can encounter blizzards, driving rainstorms, icy roads, avalanches, falling rocks, sand storms, or tornadoes. Sea-faring characters can fight tidal waves, hurricanes, whirlpools, or icebergs. Parties of space-traveling PCs can confront black holes, asteroid fields, ion storms, worm holes, stars going nova, warp bubbles, or dark nebulae. No matter what the adverse environment is, the PCs must overcome or endure an obstacle that they may have little or no direct control over.

A type of problem that PCs on the road can combat is active opposition-parties that, through their actions, prevent the PCs from reaching their goal. Foes could be the natural inhabitants of the area (bears, tigers, etc.) or creatures that resent the PCs' intrusion; monstrous examples include ogres, giants, faeries, or dragons in fantasy RPGs; mummies, werewolves,

or zombies in modern horror RPGs; or giant space slugs, star wolves, or astral amoebas in SF games.

A different type of foe is the ever-popular random encounter or "wandering monster." They are quite common in some fantasy RPGs, so many of you should be acquainted with them. For any who aren't, wandering monsters generally are intelligent creatures who are simply passing through an area—just like the PCs in this case. (Who knows, maybe the monsters are meeting the PCs as a random encounter!) The final type of foe is the scenario's main villain or his agents. If the villain is smart enough, he may expect some hero-types to show up in an attempt to put a stop to his schemes. What better way to prevent the heroes' meddling than by preventing them from reaching the villain in the first place? The miscreant can hire agents, summon nasty creatures, or use magic or psionics to detect the heroes' approach. He then sets up an ambush or trap to eliminate the PCs before they get anywhere near the villain himself. The villain also could use some of the other obstacles listed here to discourage the characters from pursuing their objective if he is a bit more subtle or doesn't wish to alert the heroes to the fact someone is watching them. Regardless of the reasons, the heroic PCs must defeat these foes in order to reach their goal.

Every journey the characters make shouldn't be fraught with danger and calamities, or the PCs (and their players) may just decide to stay home. That said, there are more possibilities for road adventures that I don't have room to detail here. These include: chase scenes (such as the classic sequence in *Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid*), running out of food or supplies, picking up information or allies that will aid the PCs in the coming adventure, magical impediments (such as weather or illusion spells cast by the villain to slow or confuse PCs), and planting the seeds of future adventures.

While my trip was safely uneventful, I felt a certain sense of adventure simply in traveling to a new place, through areas I'd only flown over in the past.



Dale A. Donovan

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# First Quest™

FIRST QUEST is the title of TSR, Inc's Audio CD Introduction to Role-playing Game. This series is a feature where veterans of role-playing describe their first experiences

## Older than dirt

by David "Zeb" Cook

This column was designed to make me feel old. Specifically me. I am sure the editors at DRAGON® Magazine got together one day and said, "Let's make Zeb feel old." Did anyone ask, "Why should we make Zeb feel old?" No, there is no doubt they went instantly to, "How can we make Zeb feel old?" So they sat around some more until one bright person who shall remain nameless (*but you know who you are!*) said, "I know! We'll start a column where people in the gaming business write about their first gaming experiences. We'll have a couple of other people write things for it, and then we'll ask Zeb." Then the other editors looked at the person like he had been hit in the head with a 2 x 4 and demanded, "How's that supposed to make Zeb feel old?" That is when (and I am sure this happened, too) the crafty editor smiled and answered, "*Because Zeb's older than dirt!*"

Editors are an evil and cunning lot.

When Kim asked me to write for this column, I said, "Sure, it sounds like fun." Then I promptly forgot about it. When Dale came by and asked, "You're going to write that article, aren't you?" I figured my memory must be going because I'm older than dirt. So I was trapped, so I had to promise I'd do it. I started trying to remember my first role-playing experience and that's when it hit me—it was a long, long time ago. Like a dupe I had fallen into their trap.

Like a bad movie flashback, I had to roll mentally backward through the years. Five years back—I was just finishing with the design of the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. Ten years back—the ADVENTURES OF INDIANA JONES\* role-playing game was just released. Fifteen years back—I was the 23rd person hired by TSR. Twenty years ago—I was playing war games in the University of Iowa Union when Wolfgang (or was it Richard?) talked me into playing a D&D® game.

If there actually is a single, key event that changes a person's life forever as some people believe, I guess that invitation was it for me. Up until then, I had been your basic freshman English major who had no clear ambitions in life beyond a fondness for games and, well, the usual

college things. Even after I was playing for years, I still had no clue what changes had been wrought on my life. It wasn't like I sat at those first gaming sessions until a light bulb went off and I could suddenly shout, "Eureka! I will design role-playing games!" The idea that someone actually *intentionally* designed these things was completely foreign to me. If I had passed that one chance up to play, though, my life could have been vastly different—and for the worse, I would like to believe.

In all honesty, I don't remember much about the details of my first adventures. I remember I played a dwarf I named "Fred" in a fit of inspiration. He died, so I got another dwarf and named him Fred, too. He died. By my third or so dwarf it was clear I needed more of a name, so I named him Fred 9801. I'm not sure how I came up with that number, but it was probably in recognition of the fact I was going through dwarves faster than they could breed.

It wasn't until Fred 9803 that my character finally lived through more than two adventures. I was on a roll. Fred 9803 lived a singularly focused existence—go in dungeons, kill things, and get money. The rules didn't provide for much else, and only a few folks had the rules anyway. Most of us scrounged crinkly-slick photocopies of a few key charts and tables and went on trust for the rest. Adventures tended to end at the top of the dungeon stairs. There was no world, no life for the character beyond the dungeon. There really wasn't even much of a character to role-play. This was all new, and not just to us. The thin little GREYHAWK®, BLACKMOOR®, and ELDritch WIZARDRY supplements that were coming out from TSR offered up brand new ideas, no matter how sketchy. Suddenly your character could adventure outside the dungeon or investigate an evil villain's stronghold! These things hit us like thunderbolts out of the cloudless sky.

And we made mistakes—horrendous, glaring, and comical mistakes. There was the time our 1st-level party found enough cash to give us experience points for 10th level each. Of course, we only got to 2nd level, but our characters still had more

money than sense. The DM had been following the rules, too. By random die rolls, we'd gotten a treasure map and by random die rolls, it led us to a *big* treasure. Taxation, for everything, was introduced in the campaign shortly after that.

Mistakes didn't stop us though. We played all night, sometimes all weekend if studies were light, and we learned from our screw-ups. Solutions and new ideas were written up in a fanzine put out by the game club and we all had a good time.

Now, twenty years later, after graduating, going on to teaching, and then discovering a career as a game designer, a few of those things I learned stay with me. Be willing to make mistakes. There's a solution to every problem. Remember, you're supposed to be having fun. It's been good advice to remember for fifteen years of game designing.

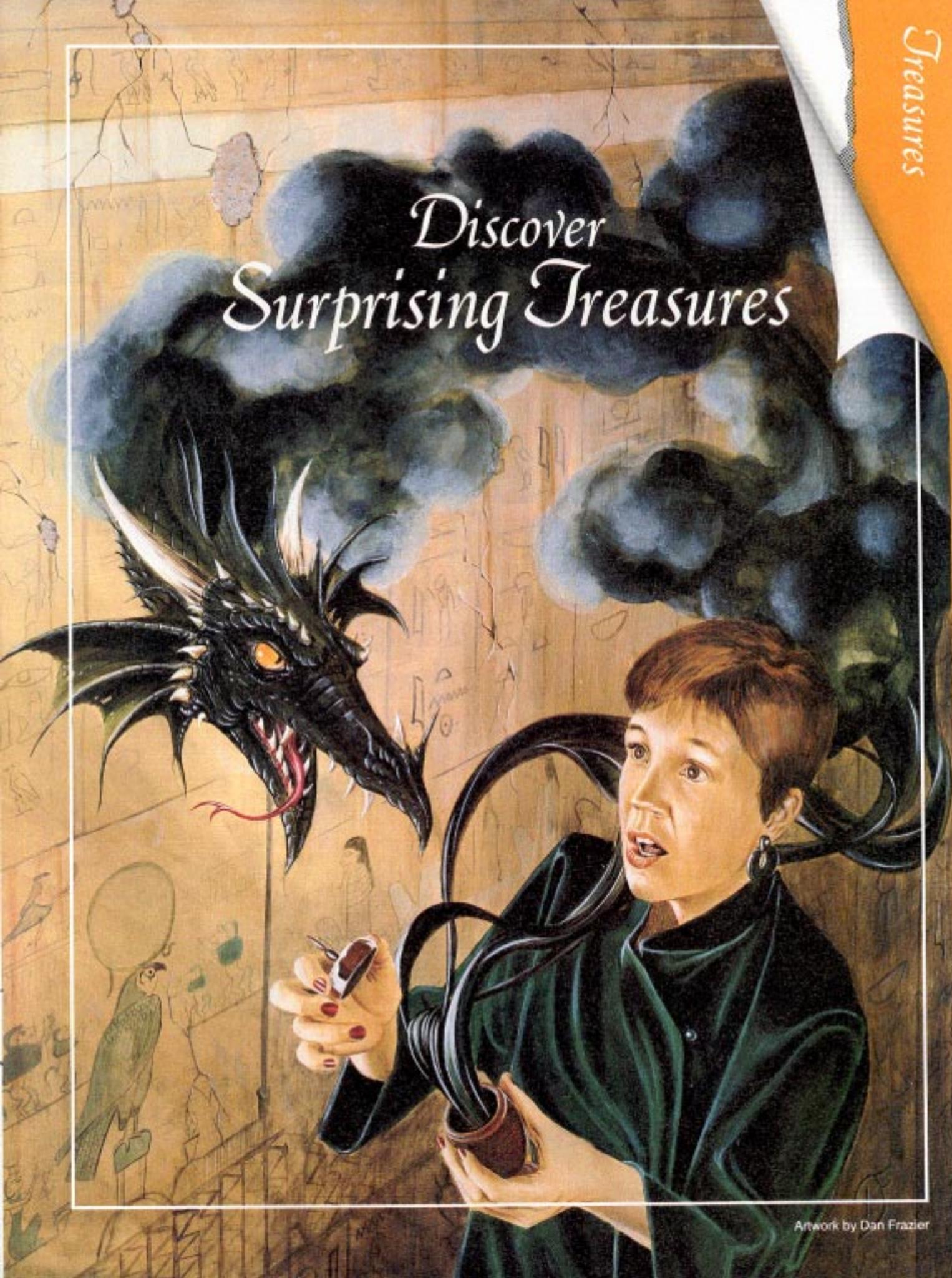
Fifteen years at TSR didn't seem that long until just recently. Part of it was thinking about this article, being reminded just how long I have been here. That's not the only reason though. After fifteen years here, more than enough to make me "older than dirt" in the eyes of my co-workers, it is time to move on to new challenges—and that's what I'm doing. As I write this, I'm in my last few weeks with TSR. Soon, I'll be moving and starting again—this time with a company called Magnet Interactive Studios. I'm jumping on the latest train headed for the new frontier: computer multimedia. I'll still be making games (and a lot of other really interesting stuff, I hope) but now they'll be in a new media—CD-ROMs or whatever else comes down the electronic pike. I don't know what I'm doing (yet), but it will be fun. Watch for us—Magnet, that is—in the future.

So, what started with my first gaming experience has come full circle to my farewell to TSR. It's been quite a time, up and down, but I'm happy to have done it. I'm not saying goodbye—I hope you'll still see articles and games with my name on them. It's just that now it's time for someone else here to be older than dirt.

\* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.

Treasures

# Discover Surprising Treasures



Artwork by Dan Frazier

Dealing with artifacts in your campaign

# BIG-LEAGUE MAGAZINE



by Chris Osborne

Artwork by Dan Frazier

*DM: You put the last section of the rod of seven parts into place, finishing the great quest! Unbelievable power is now in your hands. . .*

*Player (interrupting): Can I blow away mountains with this?*

*DM: What?*

*Player: Change the course of mighty rivers?*

*DM: No!*

*Player: Take control of a great empire?*

*DM: Uh, I'm not sure.*

*Player: Then what good is it?*

*DM: AHHHHHH!*

Have you heard a similar exchange between a DM and a player? The *rod of seven parts*, while not able to perform the feats the player asked about, represented a staggering power in that campaign. This player wanted world domination from one artifact.

Where do players get the idea that artifacts must have world-shattering powers?

In Robert Jordan's book *The Shadow Rising*, number four in the Wheel of Time series, we find a possible explanation. An artifact named Callandor is an awesome magic amplifier, shaped like a long sword, but appearing to be made of fine glass. In one memorable scene, the main character uses the blade to generate chain-lightning. The magic lightning races throughout the halls, corridors, and rooms of an immense fortress. The magic kills hundreds of enemy humanoids—maybe thousands—in the blink of an eye. The magic lightning also avoids every innocent noncombatant and friendly warrior, though the wielder of Callandor does not know ninety-five percent of the inhabitants of the fortress. Later, the main character says, "Callandor. With that in my hands, I can do anything. Anything. I know I can do anything." A player may want his artifact-bearing character to be able to do anything and everything in the campaign.

What to do?

There is nothing wrong with having a

superweapon like Callandor in a campaign. Not every DM wants to deal with that level of magic, though. To successfully manage artifacts in a campaign, a DM must face a number of decisions.

## Types of artifacts

The first question is not obvious. What is an artifact? An artifact is a magical item that cannot have been created by a contemporary wizard or priest. It may be of great or not so great power; even a magical item of insignificant power becomes wondrous when no one understands its workings or its construction.

The three power groups of artifacts described organize artifacts by magic strength relative to other artifacts, not to the general level of magic in a milieu.

### Low-power artifacts

It is rare to see low-power artifacts in any milieu. Believe it or not, these items already exist. They are the ordinary magical items listed in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. In a low-magic milieu, even a *wand of fireballs* can be an artifact. How is that possible?

In the standard low-magic milieu, wizards are rare. Spell levels, spell components, and magical item supplies are hard to find. Wizards in this milieu will be unlikely to know how to make a *wand of fireballs*. Most wizards will have trouble trying to gather enough written material on spells to do ordinary spell research. Magical item research will be tougher. (The magical item might require inventing new spells for the enchantment, too.) This means that most magical items in the milieu are going to be items from a lost civilization, or the works of one or two brilliant wizards. These explanations are the most common. Other sources of magical items might be a deity, a special enchanted location, or a cache of magic that slipped in from another dimension.

What about that *wand of fireballs*?

A band of three adventurers, two war-

riors and a wizard, set out on a quest to save their king's main castle from a siege laid by a pretender to the throne's army. The band consults a fortuneteller to determine the best course of action, and is told of a hidden chest that holds the secret to defeating the pretender. After enduring hardship, following false leads, and fighting off agents of the pretender, the band secures the chest. The chest holds a *wand of fireballs* and enough gold to build a small keep. The wizard realizes the wands importance and rushes back to the castle, where she fires two dozen *fireballs* into the ranks of the pretender's army. The enemy soldiers have never faced so much magic in their lives, and are routed. The pretender, believing many wizards are aiding the king, disappears. The grateful king grants the adventurers' request for land, where the gold is put to good use.

All this because of one *wand of fireballs*.

Included in the group of low-power artifacts are all those items a DM can invent that perform useful, but low-power effects. Items like these may seem laughable, but in a world with only a handful of normal magical items, they are important.

*Example:* Scanning down the list of spells in the *Player's Handbook*, we find the old standby, *continual light*, with its permanent duration. The DM, exercising his right to evict spells from a milieu, gives the boot to *continual light*. The DM then scatters a hundred golf-ball-sized blue spheres around the world. While the spheres look and feel like ordinary rock to the touch, any wizard or priest PC will recognize one as a *light stone*. When a light spell is cast on a *light stone*, the spell's duration is increased to one year. *Light stones* cannot be duplicated. Sources of cold, smokeless, and lasting light, *light stones* take on a high value without being powerful magic.

### Medium-power artifacts

Artifacts in this group can be combinations of existing items—for instance, a single piece of headgear that has the powers of a *helm of brilliance*, a *helm of telepathy*, and a *helm of underwater action*. They also can be items containing long lists of spell effects, such as a *staff of the magi* with no charges to limit the total number of uses. Medium-power artifacts, no matter how many powers they have, always have powers that can be duplicated by spell-casters.

The *DMG* (pages 90-91) gives guidelines for the creation of artifacts. The top recommended powers are called Major Powers. All Major Powers can be duplicated by an 18th-level wizard or a 16th-level priest. This means that most artifacts created with these guidelines are medium-power artifacts.

Medium-power artifacts can be created by groups of high-level NPCs who have discovered how to pack two times, three times, or more of the normal amount of magic into an object.

### High-power artifacts

These are the most powerful artifacts. They produce magic no spell-caster can duplicate or simulate: Callandor from Robert Jordan's books; Stormbringer from Michael Moorcock's books; The Tablets of Fate from the *Avatar* trilogy, etc.

It's normally wise to use the core game mechanics in creating artifacts. Designing high-power artifacts, though, requires ignoring mechanics, because the artifacts can do whatever the DM wants them to do. Thus, balance control, described below, must be taken seriously with respect to high-power artifacts.

Introducing high-power artifacts into a milieu produces far-reaching consequences. The potency of high-power artifacts means that campaign issues will revolve around ownership of them.

Although magic works differently in Robert Jordan's books, Callandor in an AD&D® game world would multiply all the parameters of any spell by at least ten. Imagine a 10th-level wizard throwing a 100 HD *lightning bolt*. That's too powerful for most DMs. Artifacts less powerful than Callandor, or even Stormbringer, still can be high-power artifacts. Remember, the magic only needs to exceed spell-caster capability, not make those capabilities look insignificant.

Due to their strong magic, high-power artifacts must come into being as a result of Divine Creation or Vacuum Genesis (see below), or must be the products of fabled civilizations whose citizens included 40th-plus-level wizards and priests with 10th-level magic, quest spells, psionics, and divinely granted wishes. The Dragon Kings of the DARK SUN® setting may be able to create high-power artifacts, but only if they cooperate. Detailed below are two methods of creation for high-power artifacts.

*Divine Creation:* This theory of origin works with medium- and high-power artifacts. Deities who create artifacts, and let them pass into the hands of mortals, do so to further their own ends. This kind of artifact is called a relic if mortals know the origin. PCs in possession of a divinely created artifact will find themselves drawn into the schemes of that deity. Remember Perseus, and how Zeus drew him into a quest after giving him Aegis, and other artifacts as well. Low-power artifacts created by deities have the same religious significance as medium- and high-power artifacts. The same political and military significance appears in low-magic milieus.

*Vacuum Genesis:* Like Divine Creation, this origin works best with high-power artifacts and, rarely, medium-power artifacts. Vacuum genesis means literally that the artifact came out of nowhere, usually at the beginning of the multiverse. When this happens, only one item is created, or perhaps two or three items with interlocking powers. Artifacts are given this origin to make them the most powerful magic anywhere. Medium-power artifacts can

have this origin in low-magic milieus. Often, the inhabitants of the Outer Planes cannot use a Vacuum Genesis artifact. If those Outer Planar inhabitants could use one, they would spend all their time trying to possess one, instead of paying attention to the Prime Material Plane. Outer Planar inhabitants will manipulate mortals into using a Vacuum Genesis artifact for their own schemes (an important caveat to would-be artifact owners). Using this idea, a DM can base the motivations of an entire pantheon of deities and fiends on their individual or collective desire to direct the use of a Vacuum Genesis artifact through worshipers. The epic battles and intrigues of the deities, as they attempt to indirectly control the artifact, would make an ideal history for any pantheon.

These artifacts are intimately woven into the fate and history of their multiverse, whether anyone knows about it or not.

### Why use artifacts?

Why should a DM put up with the headaches that artifacts can cause?

There are two reasons to put an artifact into the hands of a PC: The DM wants the character to fulfill a goal, or wants the PC to have a toy. Toys are interesting for a while; then they become boring as their novelty wears off. When an artifact's special nature becomes commonplace, what a DM will need to do for something really special is frightening.

For DMs interested in the first reason, there is one goal with a thousand variations: defeat the Dark Power. Whether that Dark Power is a 20th- or 50th-level NPC, an evil deity, a corrupted emperor, a fiend from the lower planes, true entropy, or the accumulation of pure evil, nothing less than defeating a dangerous threat of similar proportions can merit the use of an artifact's magic. For simplicity, I call that threat the Dark Power. It need not be evil, only dangerous. The scale of the Dark Power's threat is dictated by the size of the DM's milieu, but should at least endanger most of the peoples and nations known to the PCs.

Once the DM has picked and plotted a variation of the goal, the PCs can be offered the chance of setting out on the road to the ultimate confrontation: a complete campaign.

The *DMG* and many DRAGON® Magazine articles speak in favor of PCs using diplomacy in dealing with enemies. This is a situation where that does not apply. Whatever course a DM and the PCs have worked on toward the final confrontation with the Dark Power, that final confrontation should be non-negotiable. If the confrontation is negotiable, there is no need for an artifact. The exception to this is when the Dark Power feels uncertain about the result of the confrontation, and wants to live to fight another day. The PCs then get to decide whether to let the Dark Power live—a difficult moral choice, one

that will build on a character's believability, and a player's role-playing skill.

## Maintaining the balance

Keeping a campaign's power levels balanced when artifacts are in the hands of PCs is a problem. There are several solutions, and some general advice, that can be suggested. The solutions involve ways of limiting an artifact's utility. The campaign balance-control solutions discussed here generally apply to medium- and high-power artifacts. Balancing a campaign with only low-power artifacts is easier because the powers of the artifacts are known and widely playtested (watch out for the newly invented low-power artifacts, though).

*Owner beware:* The DMG (pages 90-91) cites that all artifacts are dangerous, and corrupt the wielder. The dangers are horrible changes that come over the wielder, or the wielder's surroundings, when the artifact is used. The corrupting effect means that the personality of the wielder will suffer assault from possessing the artifact. Symptoms of a personality assault are paranoia, followed by psychotic behavior, and greedy possession of the artifact (every one of Tolkien's ringbearers, except Bilbo and Sam, found it impossible to willingly give up the One Ring). The trouble with this solution is that when bad things start happening to a player's character, the player will want the character to stop using the artifact. The corrupting effect, though, causes the character to desire the artifact overwhelmingly. I have observed one or two players able to perform this role with distinction. The rest want nothing to do with it, and feel that the DM has arbitrarily taken away control of their character. Control of their character is a great part of the fun many players experience. When this control is removed, role-playing loses its luster, and the player loses interest. A DM should carefully sound out players in the campaign for those willing to play the role of a doomed wielder. A DM can avoid this trouble by disassociating the artifact from its dangers and corrupting effects. Either delay the onset, or cause the dangers and corrupting effects to *seem* to come from somewhere else.

*The detection method:* Common sense suggests that since artifacts are the pinnacle of magical power, then magic generated by artifacts can be detected from a great distance. Any person or creature, with the spell or ability of *detect magic* operating will be able to sense the direction and distance to an artifact being used (when the wielder is activating any power or spell effect). The range is one mile per experience level or hit dice of the caster for detecting low-power artifacts, 10 miles per experience level or hit dice for medium-power artifacts, and 100 miles per experience level or hit dice for high-power artifacts. An error margin of 10%

in the final distance determined is always possible. Any character using an artifact that is being controlled by this campaign-balance solution is vulnerable to location and pursuit. Artifacts with powers of concealment from magic can be difficult to control with this solution. Artifacts with continuously operating defensive or miscellaneous powers cannot be detected unless the defense is tested, or the miscellaneous power is actively used. The rare permanent miscellaneous power (e.g., the wielder has all ability scores of 18 while he possesses the artifact) can be detected only in a radius of one mile, except when the artifact is picked up for the first time; then normal detection ranges apply.

*The time factor:* An easy way to balance an artifact is to limit the number of times the artifact's array of powers can be called on. If an artifact's powers can be activated only for one hour, three times a century, players will not be inclined to have their characters use the artifact for fun. Artifact powers restricted to use during certain events also are possible, and are good for artifacts tied to a prophecy. A DM should let the PCs know the total number of uses, or give hints about the special events. This can be done through the collected writings of oracles and seers, or songs and legends based on those writings.

*The power of destiny:* Powerful artifacts are the center of attention. The actions of people are twisted around the artifact's fate. Regardless of whether she has created a history for an artifact, a DM can decide that the artifact has a destiny. This destiny is described in a list of events that is certain to happen to the artifact, no matter who wields it. A player who chooses to have a character take possession of this kind of artifact is freely choosing to bind the character's destiny to the artifacts. The DM should make the prospective artifact owner aware of the irreversible nature of this choice.

*Balance by design:* An important balancing factor is artifact design. The temptation exists to create an artifact with enough abilities to conquer any problem. Don't do it! Artifacts that are powerful enough to overcome any problem do overcome any problem, and thereby end the campaign. An artifact should have the powers its creators gave it, not the powers players think their characters need. Writing down all an artifact's powers in advance of allowing the artifact into play ensures that an artifact's power will not grow or change as characters run into obstacles.

*Chink in the armor:* The DMG advises that all artifacts have a weakness that allows them to be destroyed in a special way, a different weakness for each artifact. This advice implies that DMs should not create indestructible artifacts, even though some may want to. If a DM does choose to make an item indestructible (or virtually so), at least a conditional weakness should be defined. A conditional

weakness means that when preset conditions are met, the magic powers of the artifact are changed, reduced, or eliminated. When the conditions abate, the artifact's powers return to normal. Finding out what the conditions are is as difficult as finding out how an artifact is destroyed.

*One purpose only:* Artifacts created for a single purpose are called Nemesis artifacts. The artifact functions only when being used to further its purpose. If, for any reason, a Nemesis artifact can no longer carry out its purpose, it will lose all its magic. If a Nemesis artifact is important enough in the milieu—it was created to destroy the Dark Power, for example—then it is usually invulnerable to destruction until the Dark Power is destroyed. (If such an artifact is not invulnerable, the Dark Power will spare no effort to destroy it, and a theme of the campaign can involve the PCs protecting the artifact long enough for it to be used.) The purpose the artifact exists for can be as general or specific as the DM desires.

*Mind of its own:* The last solution is to make an artifact intelligent. Treat it as a full-fledged NPC, with goals and desires all its own. These personal objectives dictate the artifact's actions. Players find it hard to cause their characters to abuse an artifact's power when the artifact will not cooperate.

None of these solutions are exclusive, or all encompassing. Feel free to mix, match, and invent new ones.

The solutions for campaign balance offered above all involve limiting the artifact itself. The next step in maintaining campaign balance is to tailor PC encounters to the power of the artifact. Make sure that the PCs discover the advantages— anonymity versus publicity—of not using an artifact to solve every small problem that comes their way. When the PCs have to use the artifact, their opponents should not be pushovers. The magic of the Dark Power should match or exceed the opposing artifact's power. The challenge to PCs is greater than way.

Because artifacts are so powerful, most of them have military uses. Any nation owning an artifact has an advantage over a neighboring nation that does not have one. If a ruler, or any high-ranking subordinate, hears about an artifact within his grasp, he will not hesitate to send soldiers, personal guards, or special operatives, all with the law behind them, to acquire the artifact. If the owner does not give the artifact to these authorities, and cannot flee, there will be a fight. Win, lose, or run away, those who have thwarted the ruler will be branded outlaws. Avoiding this Catch-22 situation is difficult.

Nobody said owning an artifact would be easy.

## A question of history

Do you need to have a complete history for every artifact you invent? You can have one, but you don't need to. The light

stones mentioned earlier need no history, they are easy to add to a campaign, and will not influence the course of high-level adventures. Players won't have their characters spend valuable time searching out legends on blue light-spheres, but PCs will want to know everything they can find out about more powerful artifacts. The DM decides how much they get to know.

The main questions to be answered by an artifact's history are: When was it made? Who made it? Why did the creator make it? What are its powers? Has it ever been used before? If it hasn't been used, why not? If it has been used, was it a success, or a failure?

A good time to deal with these questions is during milieu construction. That's not always possible, so DMs are faced with either changing or filling in their milieu history, or going without an artifact history.

Knowing an artifact's history lets the DM tie that artifact tightly into the campaign. Rumors in the campaign world can tell of an NPC using an artifact, as foretold by prophecies the PCs have been hearing since childhood. When PCs are in a campaign against the Dark Power, DMs can write down a few vague lines of prophecy based on what the PCs are about to do. If the PCs run into the prophecy halfway through the campaign, the hurried conferences can be amusing to watch as players try to predict what is going to happen.

The DM determines how many artifacts exist in the milieu. The more artifacts, the more history a DM has to think up. Keeping the number of artifacts low reduces the DM's information load, and is a subtle method of artifact balance-control.

What about the DM without time to invent a history? Forget about history. Invent the artifact, think about what you want to do with it, and introduce it into the campaign. With an artifact that is newly discovered and unused, no one will know that a new power has entered into the milieu. As soon as the artifact is used publicly, the movers and shakers of the milieu will try to acquire it. Until the time the artifact is revealed openly, PCs have an ace up their sleeves. The artifact without a history is best balanced by the detection method.

### Keep magic under control

Campaign problems can begin when a DM fails to keep a handle on the amount and type of magic that will be available to the PCs. Without this control, as the PCs go through a succession of adventures, items are handed out from the magic table in the *DMG*, and the DM eventually finds that the PCs have many magical items, which, taken together, translate into a great amount of raw power. Soon the need for magical items that are yet more powerful is on the doorstep. Artifacts appear on

that doorstep, and if the DM isn't used to running high-powered campaigns, the next step is to a campaign where the players are in charge.

The solution to avoiding this loss of control begins during the design of the milieu. If the DM intends on having artifacts in the milieu, then questions centered on artifacts need to be answered. What kind of artifact, if any, belongs in the campaign? The DM must decide whether low-, medium-, or high-power artifacts belong in the milieu. The decision depends on the amount of magic present, in the form of spell levels, items, magical beings, etc. *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* (page 65) gives three types of milieus with magic.

Milieus with low magic are paired best with low-power artifacts. People in this milieu rarely encounter magic. The wielder of a medium- or high-power artifact could dominate kingdoms. A low-magic world with more than five or six medium- or high-power artifacts would qualify as a moderate magic milieu.

Milieus with moderate magic can tolerate the presence of one or two score medium-power artifacts, and two or three high-power artifacts. Low-power artifacts are equivalent to normal magical items in this milieu.

Milieus with excessive magic have artifacts in the hands of most major NPCs, and the most powerful NPCs and the deities have high-power artifacts. The high-power artifacts belonging to deities usually are more powerful than the high-power artifacts in mortal hands.

Another question for the DM is: Can mortals make artifacts? If they can't, artifacts can only come from immortals, or from Vacuum Genesis.

Are artifacts more or less powerful than deities? If artifacts are more powerful than deities, and mortals can create artifacts, then the highest-level NPCs are close in strength to deities. If artifacts are more powerful than deities, and mortals can't create artifacts, then the deities are above mortals (as they are normally). If artifacts are less powerful than deities, then those deities are safe from the threat of mortals possessing artifacts.

What is the campaign significance of artifacts?

Does the campaign revolve around artifacts?

Are artifacts only powerful tools to accomplish the ends of the wielder?

Can artifacts embody the essence of any of the great magical powers, like Evocation, Abjuration, Elemental Fire, or even time or fate? If any artifacts can embody one of these powers, then just how far does that power go?

These questions are important. When a DM answers these sorts of big questions, the answers reveal something important about the way powerful magic works in the DM's milieu.

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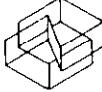
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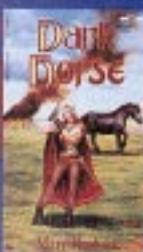
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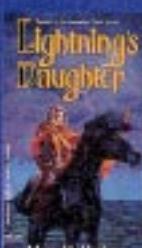
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# BAZAAR of the BIZARRE

Celtic magical items from myth and legend

by Steve Stewart

Artwork by Bob Klasnich

The AD&D® game's HR3 *Celts Campaign Sourcebook* states, "Magical items are comparatively rare in Celtic myth but are wide and imaginative in their variety." Celtic magical items may be rare in comparison to those found in an average AD&D campaign, but Celtic myths are chock full of them. Any perceived scarcity may be due to the fact that relatively few Celtic myths survive in comparison to myths from other cultures.

A unique category of magical items exists

in Celtic myth that is not mentioned in the source book: magical plants and animals. These magical plants and animals are ordinary natural examples of the species, except that certain benefits can be gained by consuming them in some cases; or in others the creature or plant carries a dweomer that can be used by characters in game play without disrupting game balance. These magical plants and animals, as well as more ordinary magical items, are detailed on the following pages.

*In recompense for the murder of Cian, the god Lugh required the three sons of Tuirenn to recover eight items as a blood fine. Six of those items were magical and are detailed below.*



**Hound of Loruaidhe:** This hound, once owned by a king, had the ability to unerringly track any quarry it chased. The dog has the same statistics as a war dog of normal intelligence.

In game terms, this hound can track any creature that has a scent with a 100% chance of success. Rain, masking scents, and other adverse conditions can lower this percentage as detailed below.

Quarry crosses water	-20%
Quarry continuously moving through running water	-80%
Raining	-40%
Snowing	-20%
Quarry's scent masked (DM's discretion)	-10% to 60%
Highly populated area	-10%
Each four-hour period before tracking commences	-20%

When modifiers lower the hounds chance of following a scent, a check should be made each turn to determine if the magic hound has lost the scent.

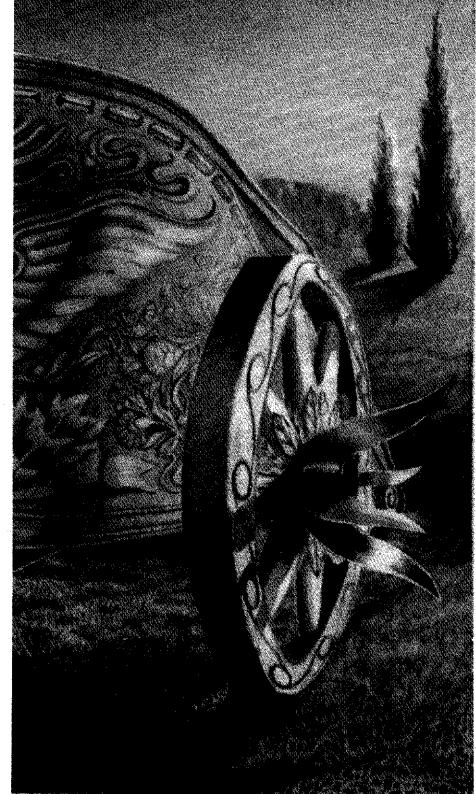
Magical hounds of tracking were also used by the sons of Tuirenn to track Cian.  
**XP value: 500.**



**Pigskin of Tuis:** Tuis, a Greek king, possessed this valuable item. When placed on the back of a wounded character, it heals  $3d8 + 3$  hit points. This healing property can be used once per day. It has no effect when placed over the body of an unwounded individual.

The *pigskin* also has the property of being able to change water strained through it into wine of the highest quality. The pigskin can convert eight gallons of water to wine per day.

**XP value: 3,000.**



**Chariot of Dobhar:** Dobhar the King of Sicily owned this fantastic chariot. It appears as a normal chariot of fine make. The chariot can carry up to three people over land or sea at a rate of 36" over land and 25" over water. Two normal horses pull the chariot.

The horses pulling the chariot must rest every four hours. Each horse must make a saving throw vs. death magic for every additional hour more than four that the horses pull the chariot, or collapse from exhaustion. The saving throw is made at -1 cumulative per hour more than five. Roll 1d6 to determine during what turn of the hour that the horse(s) collapse. One horse can pull the chariot at a rate of 12" over land and 8" over water.

The chariot also is equipped with magical chariot scythes that inflict  $1d6 + 2$  hit points of damage on anyone within 2' of the chariot when it passes and who fails a Dexterity check. Anyone who tries to climb onto the chariot in combat must make a successful Dexterity check or take  $1d4 + 2$  hit points of damage.

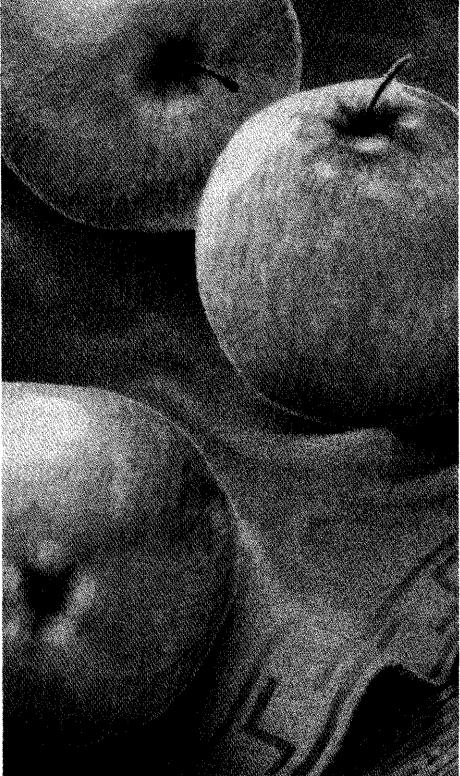
**XP value: 8,000**



**Pigs of Easal:** Easal, King of the Golden Pillars, owned seven magical pigs. These pigs had the ability to *resurrect* after being consumed.

After eating the pigs, their owner(s) must lay their bones out to dry in the sun the day after they are eaten. At dusk of that day the pigs rise from the dead, ready to be slaughtered again. The bones of the pigs must be laid out in the sun the day after they are slaughtered, or they never come back to life again. If there is no visible sun in the sky, the pigs will not return to life.

**XP value: 500 each.**



**Apples of Hesperides:** These magical apples never get smaller when eaten. They can provide a character with as much nourishment as a full day's meals. The apples originally came from the Garden of Hesperides.

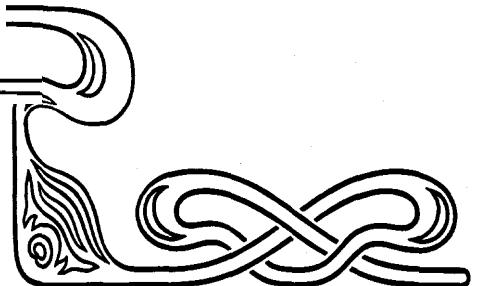
**XP value:** 300 each.



**Spear of Pisear:** This spear, which belonged to a Persian king, contains great power. It appears to be an ordinary spear shrouded in lapping flames. It has a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls and confers immunity to fire upon its wielder as a *ring of fire* resistance. When a successful hit is scored in melee, the spear ignites combustibles, including living creatures. Creatures struck by the spear take 1d6 points of damage per round until the fire is extinguished, which can be accomplished by ordinary means. A save vs. breath weapon indicates half damage.

Note that the spear's magical properties require that it be kept in a barrel of water when not held in combat.

**XP value:** 2,000.



*The Sons of Don or the Tuatha De Danann brought many amazing treasures to the Celtic people when they invaded and pacified the Fir Bolgs. Among the civilizing gifts of the Sons of Don were ironworking, medicine, magic, and poetry. They also brought four powerful magical items.*



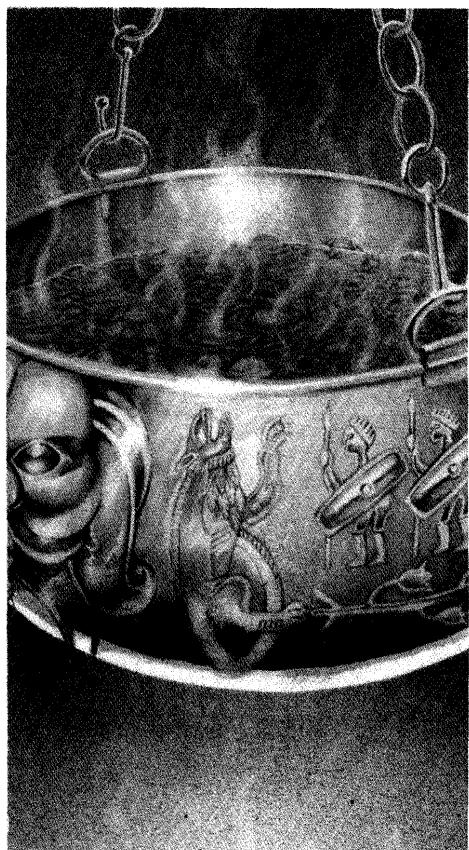
**Spear of Lugh:** This weapon looks like a normal spear except for the blood-red color of its head. In combat it is treated as a +3 weapon. When a hit is scored, it drains 1d6 + 3 hit points from the target and transfers them to the wielder of the spear. The wielder can gain up to 40 hit points over her maximum hit-point total in this manner before the spear is sated. These phantom hit points are lost first and disappear one hour after combat is concluded at the rate of one hit point per round. The phantom hit points drip from the spear in the form of blood.

**XP value:** 2,000.

**Cauldron of Dagda:** This ornately carved cauldron is constructed of gold and bears the image of the god of its name. The cauldron will be full of a warm stew when found. No matter how much of the stew is removed, the cauldron will never appear empty. However, after the cauldron feeds 150 people in a day, the stew will no longer have any nourishing value.

The cauldron also has the unusual property of only providing nourishing stew for the brave and pure of heart. Cowards and deceivers gain no benefit from eating the magical stew.

**XP value:** 1,000.



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**Stone of destiny:** The properties of this stone are vaguely described in myth. It appears as a very valuable gemstone. When it is held by a druid, he can predict the future as if he had cast an *augury* spell. This power can be used three times per day.

**XP value:** 1,500.

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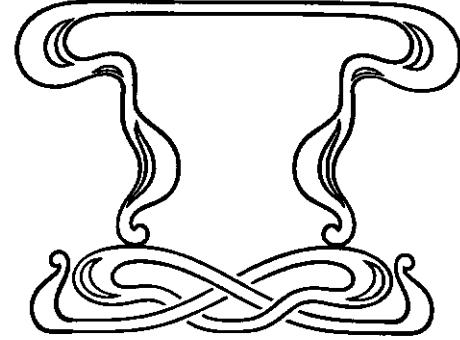
1-2  
3-7  
8-11  
12-15  
16-20

### Limb

head  
torso  
right arm  
left arm  
right leg/left leg

Only creatures of basically human or humanoid form are affected by the slaying ability of the sword. Under no circumstance will undead or other-planar creatures be affected by the slaying ability of the sword.

**XP value:** 10,000.



Other magical items are peppered throughout Celtic myth. Following are a selection of items from several different legends.



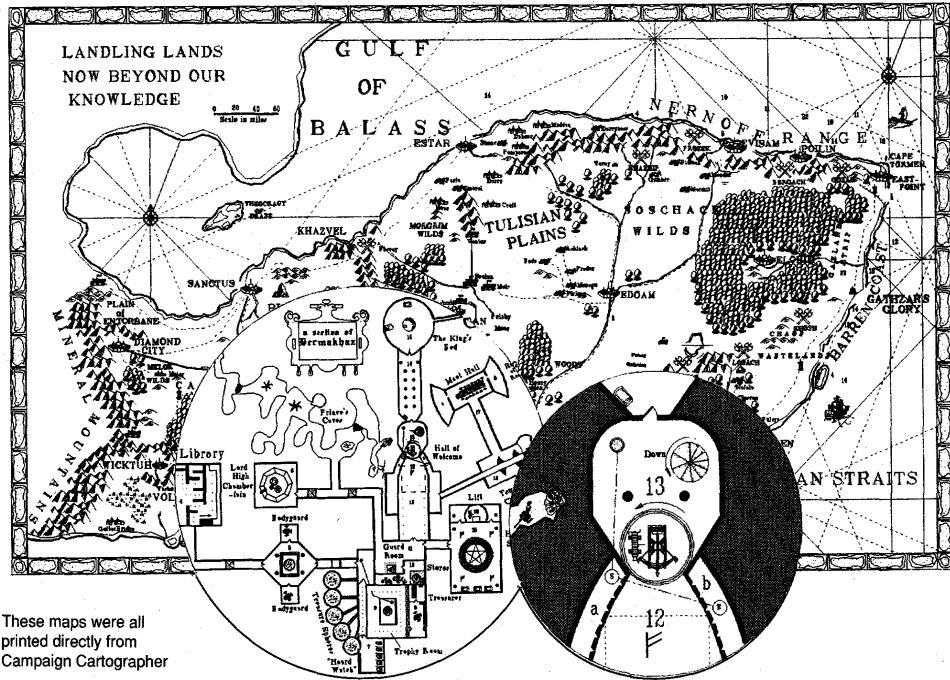
**Horn of dispelling illusions:** This mystical horn appears to be an ordinary hunting horn. The hero Gereint used this horn to dispel a magical fog and other similar enchantments. The horn may be used only by fighters, paladins, rangers, and bards.

When winded by a character of the proper class, this horn dispels all magical illusions and fogs, regardless of the level of the spell-caster who created them, within a 100' radius. Only part of an illusion must be visible within the effective radius for the horn to effect it. The horn also nullifies the effects of a *horn of fog* and other similar magical items. The horn can be sounded three times per day.

Note that the horn has no effect on invisible creatures and ordinary illusions such as mirages.

**XP value:** 2,500.

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**Cup of truth:** This highly crafted golden goblet has the unique property of shattering whenever a lie is told before it and reassembling whenever the truth is told before it. The wizard Manannan (sometimes portrayed as a god) owned this cup and displayed its powers to the hero Cormac. The cup only functions if a true or false statement is made within 10' of it. It has unlimited charges.

**XP value: 1,000.**

**Well of magical lands:** This magical device may appear as a lake, spring, fountain, or well. It functions exactly like a magical *well of rainfall* (page 38 of the *Celts Campaign Sourcebook*) except that when the rain stops, the character finds that he has been magically transported to a random hidden magical place (see page 39 of the *Celts Campaign Sourcebook*). A similar well was encountered by Mal-lolwch, King of Ireland, in the legend of "Branwen Daughter of Llyr."

**XP value: 6,000.**

**Cloak of invisibility:** This item appears to be a normal leather cloak of fine make. It has properties similar to a *ring of invisibility*. When it is worn, the wearer becomes invisible. The invisibility lasts until a hostile action is taken by the cloak's owner, whereupon the weapon used to make the attack becomes visible. The rest of the cloak owner's body and equipment remains invisible. Attacks upon a character whose body is invisible, but whose weapon is not, are made at a -2 penalty to hit.

The hero Caswallawn, son of Beli, used an item similar to this one in the story of "Branwen the Daughter of Llyr."

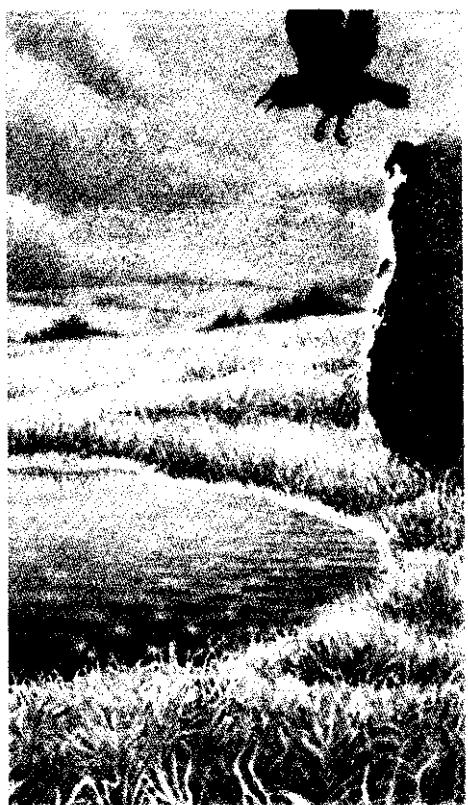
**XP value: 2,500.**

**Salmon of wisdom:** The Celts considered the salmon to be a creature of great wisdom. The Irish hero Finn gained great wisdom by eating a *salmon of wisdom* that lived in Fec's Pool in the River Boyne.

Eating a *salmon of wisdom* causes a character's Wisdom score to be raised by one point. The increase in Wisdom takes effect immediately in the form of an epiphany. A character can eat only one *salmon of wisdom* in his lifetime and gain the benefit of increased Wisdom. Additional salmon, though they provide nourishment, will have no further effect.

Note that 10% of all *salmon of wisdom* increases a character's Wisdom to 18.

**XP value: 1,000 or 4,000 (confers 18 Wisdom).**



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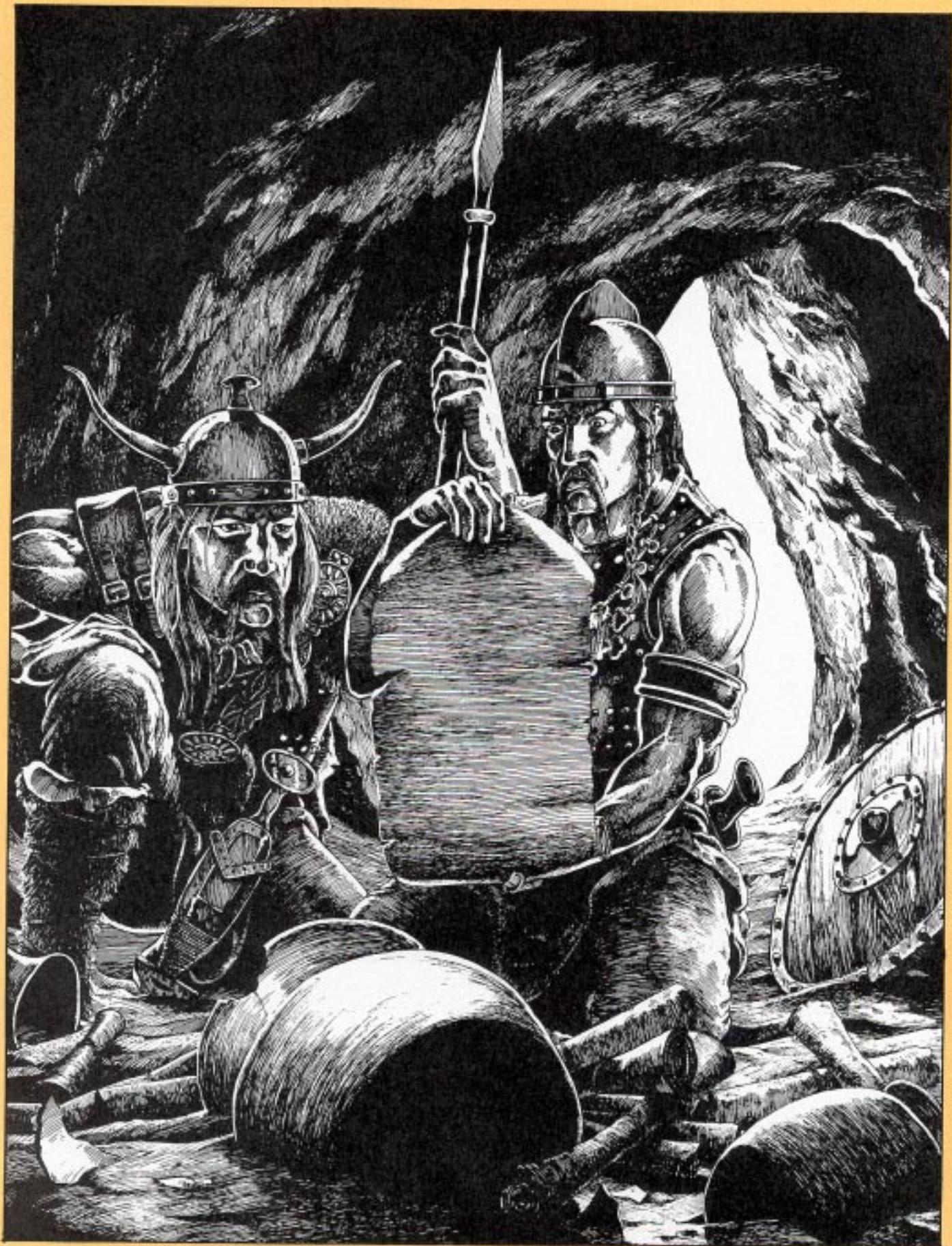
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# PAPER PROSPERITY

by Lew Wolkoff

Artwork by David Kooharian

*The party moved cautiously toward the treasure chest. The monsters and NPCs were defeated, but there always was the chance of traps. The thief and the mage moved slowly, checking all possibilities. They found nothing to worry about—which worried the thief even more. He took a deep breath and worked at the lock with a slim wire. “Click!” The lid slid back to reveal stacks and stacks . . . of paper.*

Paper!

A nasty trick? Not really. Nobody ever said that all nonmagical treasure has to be heavy pieces of metal or shiny gems.

My first experience with paper treasure was some years back when one of my characters was in a party that was sent to search the house of a wizard who'd died mysteriously. (The houses of high-level mages tend to be a little too dangerous for the taste of the local city guard types.) A secret panel in his desk almost cost us our best thief. On the set of shelves behind that panel were some shallow trays filled with scraps of colored paper. No magic, no

gems, nothing, just those scraps. Then one of the other players remembered that the DM also collected stamps. (Yes, the country we were in was sophisticated enough to have such things.) This was the mage's collection, and it was worth almost 60,000 gp. The mage, it seems, had plans to leave town in a hurry if necessary. Stamps are so much easier to hide than coins.

The party's deal with the local authorities was that we got to keep all nonmagical treasure—subject to a hefty salvage tax. Those stamps were the main source of income from that adventure.

This got all of us thinking about paper treasures, and a lot of things that I'll be mentioning in this article showed up in later games. Paper can be a treasure, a puzzle, or the basis for an adventure.

## Paper treasures

Paper money isn't exactly the sort of treasure your players may expect, but it can be used in the sort of late medieval worlds that many of us game in. Since the first paper money appeared in China over a thousand years ago, it would certainly

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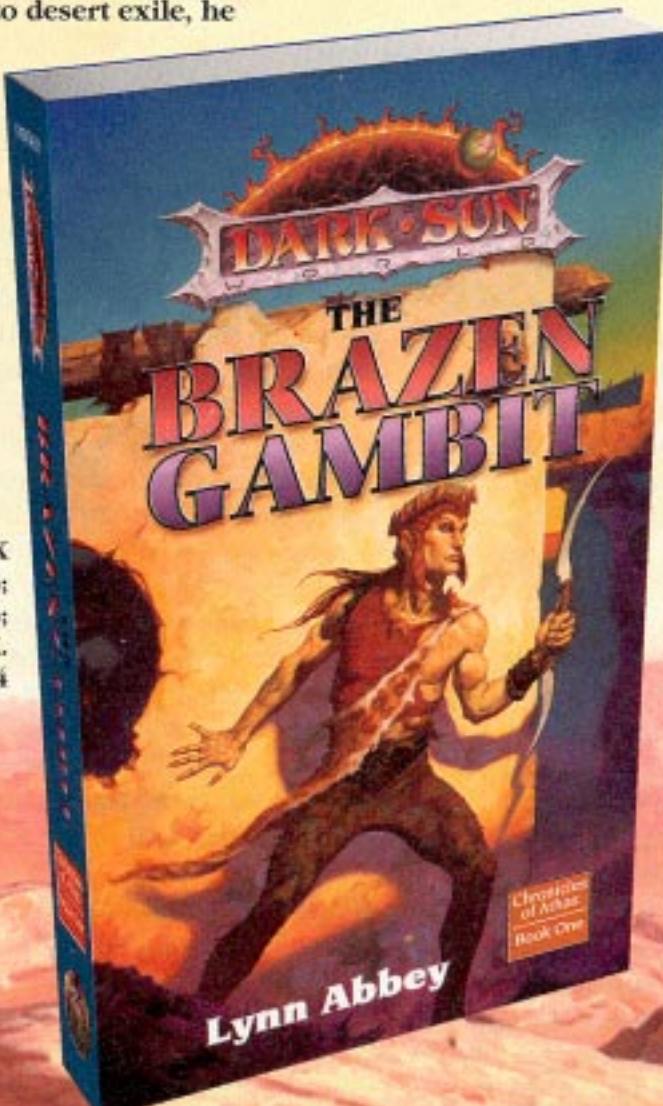
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seem appropriate in a Far Eastern game world.

Maps and floorplans can be really useful items. Imagine having a map that showed the safest route through a wilderness or a dungeon. How about the floorplan of a castle with notes written on it by the builder showing all the secret doors, hidden rooms, and physical traps, or notes on the magical traps written in by the mage who "installed" them? For that matter, why shouldn't every large dungeon complex have a map hidden in it somewhere to show the "owner" just how to get in and out in case she forgets?

A treasure map is an obvious possibility. For fun, you also can have part of a treasure map. One half of a map gets the characters to the general area, but they still must hunt for the exact location. Or, as in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, they know the exact route to the treasure—except how to get to the starting point. (They can always go searching for the other half.)

Books have been a form of magical treasure since the beginning of the D&D® game. Nonmagical books can be a treasure, too. In our real world, a Gutenberg Bible is worth some millions of dollars. In a campaign setting, books can be a treasure for another reason: their general scarcity. In the Middle Ages, books were rare. A handwritten book could take a scribe several years to produce. Fifty books was considered a sizable library, and a person often didn't loan a book to another without asking for collateral—often another book—to be held until its return.

A book also could be dangerous. In the Middle Ages, the Church proscribed a number of books, ordering all copies collected and burned. For the collector, that made a copy of one of these books rare and valuable. For those who believed what the book (often a religious work) said, the book had value as an article of their faith. In either case, a person might pay a good deal for a copy or pay a good deal to keep the authorities from knowing that he had a copy. In the movie *The Name of the Rose* (Warning: don't read the rest of this paragraph if it will spoil the movie for you), a mad monk kills a number of people to hide the existence of a copy of a lost work by Aristotle. As a work by Aristotle, the book would be given great respect, but the monk feels that its content would lead people to religious error that he cannot allow.

Books also may be valuable for their artwork. An illuminated manuscript is a beautiful thing to see. Such works, even a single page, can command high prices from a collector. I shudder at the thought of adventurers tearing apart such a book and selling the pages a few at a time, but it has happened historically.

Books can be valuable for the information they contain. In *The High King*, the last of Lloyd Alexander's *Taran the Wan-*

*derer* series, a series of magical craft items are lost. Without this magic, the skills of the farmer, the blacksmith, and the potter—among other trades—seems gone. But Taran has found books that can teach people these skills. Those books entitle him to be High King of the realm as much as his victories over the evil that had menaced it. Medieval examples might include the detailed notes of artists' apprentices that told how to produce paints of rare colors and the medical manuscripts of Avicenna (980-1037) that were treasured, recopied, and used for hundreds of years.

A travel guide book or a personal travel diary tells the best route through an area or the location of traps, monsters, or treasure. But a map can do that. The extra value of the book is that it can tell how the trap was avoided or give tips on dealing with the locals en route.

Modern researchers write extensive notes on every step of an experiment. Why shouldn't a wizard make similar notes in researching a new spell or creating a new type of magical item? Find those notes, and your mage PC are well along to being able to do the spell or build the item. For that matter, why shouldn't the papers in a wizard's home include all his old notes from his first days as a young apprentice to the materials he researched for recognition as a master of his particular school of arcane lore? Those notes that one wizard wrote as he progressed up the levels in skill might well be useful to another wizard wanting to make similar progress. They wouldn't be as useful as a magical tome—which might confer a higher level instantly—but they should be of some help in learning new spells or making better use of game experience. The material might add a bonus for rolls for learning a new spell or add a percentage to experience earned.

So far, I've been using the word "book" to talk about information on paper. Such a book won't always be a thousand-page tome. A two-page letter might describe a new spell or detail where a treasure is hidden. An outlawed (and rare) religious tract could be a single page. A description of Munge's Disease that included a successful treatment might run to ten pages. (Munge's Disease is a rare, legendary ailment that causes your armpits to fall off.)

A letter may have dangerous personal information: a declaration of love between members of two feuding factions or the offer (or acceptance) of a bribe to betray a country to its enemies. This can be the stuff of scenarios. (See *Romeo and Juliet* or the story of Benedict Arnold.) Your party finds such a letter. Do they offer to give it back, possibly for a reward? Do they try blackmail, turn it over to the authorities, or auction it to the highest bidder? If they were specifically sent to get the letter, were they sent by the writer of the letter, the intended recipient, or by an enemy of the writer or recipient?

Information also can have a built-in time

factor. A letter plotting an assassination on the 28th of the month is quite valuable to its intended victim on the 27th, but it may be of much less value on the 29th. (Since it implicates the writer and recipient(s), it will always have value to them, to the victim's survivors, and to the authorities.)

Paper may be valuable not because of what's written on it so much as because of who did the writing. People have been collecting autographs for a long time. If an autograph is valuable, then a line or two of writing above the signature can add extra value. Maybe quite a bit. In modern terms, Abraham Lincoln's autograph is valuable; a letter from him telling a friend about the weather is more valuable; and a note to the same friend about some historic event is even more valuable. If your world has autograph collectors (or historians), such things will be valuable there.

Art on paper (as opposed to paintings on canvas or wood) also may be worth something. There's a story that once Pablo Picasso, the famous artist, wanted a special kind of cabinet made. He went to a carpenter and tried to explain what he wanted. The man didn't seem to understand. Finally, Picasso grabbed a piece of paper and sketched what he wanted. "Sure, I can build that for you" the carpenter said. "How much?" asked Picasso. "Just sign that sketch," said the man. Art collectors, which exist in one way or another on many game worlds, may be willing to make similar offers.

## Documents

I've kept one large class of written paper treasure separate from the rest. This is what I call "legal" treasure. It's made up of all the sorts of legal and "quasilegal" documents that have value to the person who holds them.

Letters of credit go back at least a thousand years. A traveling merchant wouldn't want to carry large sums of money. Instead, the merchant would carry a letter from a local banking house to a banking house in his destination city. The letter would be based on an agreement between the two houses, and it would call for the second bank to give the merchant funds up to a stated amount. The merchant could use the money for expenses or to buy goods to be taken elsewhere. When the goods were sold, he'd deposit the money in the banking house in that town and take a letter of credit to the hometown bank. He could also set up an account there that he or his agents could use on future trips.

Imagine now that you have a party find this letter in the lair of a robber:

*"To the House of Grimwood: The bearer of this note is the merchant Anselmo of Swiftwater. In keeping with the agreement between our two Houses, he is to be extended credit by you in any amount up to 10,000 gold pieces. (Signed) Luigi Meglin of the House Meglin"*

If the PCs know that the House of Grimwood is a banking house in the next town, then they know that they've just been given a chance at 10,000 gp. Unless, of course, Anselmo is known to the intended recipient of the letter. In that case, they could be asking for a lot of trouble. Do they use the note, and what happens if they do?

Pardons, especially general-purpose pardons, can be valuable even to a lawful party. At the end of one movie version of *The Three Musketeers*, Cardinal Richelieu has captured the musketeers and is about to order them executed for the killing of his man. D'Artagnan produces a letter signed by Richelieu (as Prime Minister of France) and taken by D'Artagnan from the agent. The letter says that its bearer "has done what has been done by my (Richelieu's) hand and for the good of France." That letter excuses anyone of *anything*, and Richelieu is forced to set them free. In a somewhat different game setting, James Bonds license to kill works the same way. Both documents are general pardons that lets the bearer do whatever she wants without fear of reprisal.

At a different point in the *Three Musketeers*, Richelieu offers D'Artagnan a different sort of legal treasure, a commission as an officer in Richelieu's own personal guard. Such a document—with the name of the player character filled in—would

entitle that character to lodging, armor, weapons, and a salary. (The character would have to perform the duties of the office to keep these perks, but he may want to do so.) A high enough position would allow the holder to commandeer a house, a horse, supplies, or servants. He might well be treated as a member of the local aristocracy, commanding the respect—or at least the fear—of the locals. For an example, see the movie *Inspector General*. When an itinerant gypsy gets mistaken for one of Napoleon's inspectors by a crooked town council, he gets to sleep in the mayor's home, wears the police commissioner's uniform, and is given access to the town treasury. (Luckily for the town, he's an honest man.)

Deeds are wonderful things. Put your name in the right spot, and you can claim to own whatever the paper says: a rich plot of land or a building in the best part of town. (Mortgages work the same way.) Of course, laying claim to the properties of that NPC whose treasure trove a party just looted might make the party rich, or it might get them arrested.

When a tract of land or a feudal holding was in dispute—as often happened in the Middle Ages—whoever could produce a deed to the land could be the successful claimant. Such deeds were often well hidden, but they could be lost, stolen, or destroyed. Monasteries and abbeys some-

times held copies for safekeeping. A party invades a monastery or castle searching for a deed. Are they trying to recover it for the true owner or to steal or destroy it on the orders of a false claimant? Do they even know which? (Getting legal papers away from the bad guys has been used by everybody from the Roman playwrights to the Marx Brothers. Why shouldn't you steal (excuse me, copy) the same scenario?)

*Casablanca* is hardly a fantasy movie, though parts of it could be used in any number of different role-playing games. Stripped to its bare essentials, the movie is about a search for legal treasure: letters of transit. These letters, when properly filled out and signed, allows whomever has them to leave the city (and Occupied French territory) for Spain; permission to cross armed borders in a time of war. Two men are killed to get the letters, and another man offers \$20,000 to the person whom he knows (but can't prove) has the letters. (Note: That \$20,000 was in 1941 dollars; its equivalent today would probably be at least \$100,000.) In a game, player characters can sell the letters to an eager buyer, use the letters themselves, or just keep them for later use. Of course, the authorities are looking for the letters, too. Do the PCs turn them in for the reward, or do they hide them and hope that they don't have to explain how they got them in the first place?

A final legal treasure is a set of identification papers. This can be made up of formal items: a birth certificate, membership documents in a guild, permits that identify the individual and give her the right to be in a certain place or be doing a specific thing. It can be a letter from the person's family, a scrap from the local paper, etc. In the movie *The Man Who Wasn't There*, British agents stuck a slip for picking up laundry in the pocket of a body that was supposed to have been a courier with secret orders. Such a packet can be useful to anyone who doesn't want his true identity known: a spy on a mission, somebody trying to escape from the authorities (or his enemies), or just somebody who wants to be left alone. Such a packet also may be taken as proof of the death of the individual. That person's family or business associates might be willing to pay well for proof that the person was dead, so that his wealth could be distributed, his wife could remarry, etc.

By now, you may have the idea that all PCs ever find when I'm their DM is pieces of paper. That's hardly true. I have more than enough coins and gems scattered through the treasure hoards in my world. But there are a lot of other things, too. Paper treasure is flexible. It can be the reward at the end of an adventure, or the jumping-off point for a whole new adventure. I think the people I game with enjoy such things—but then, most of us like a good scrap now and then.

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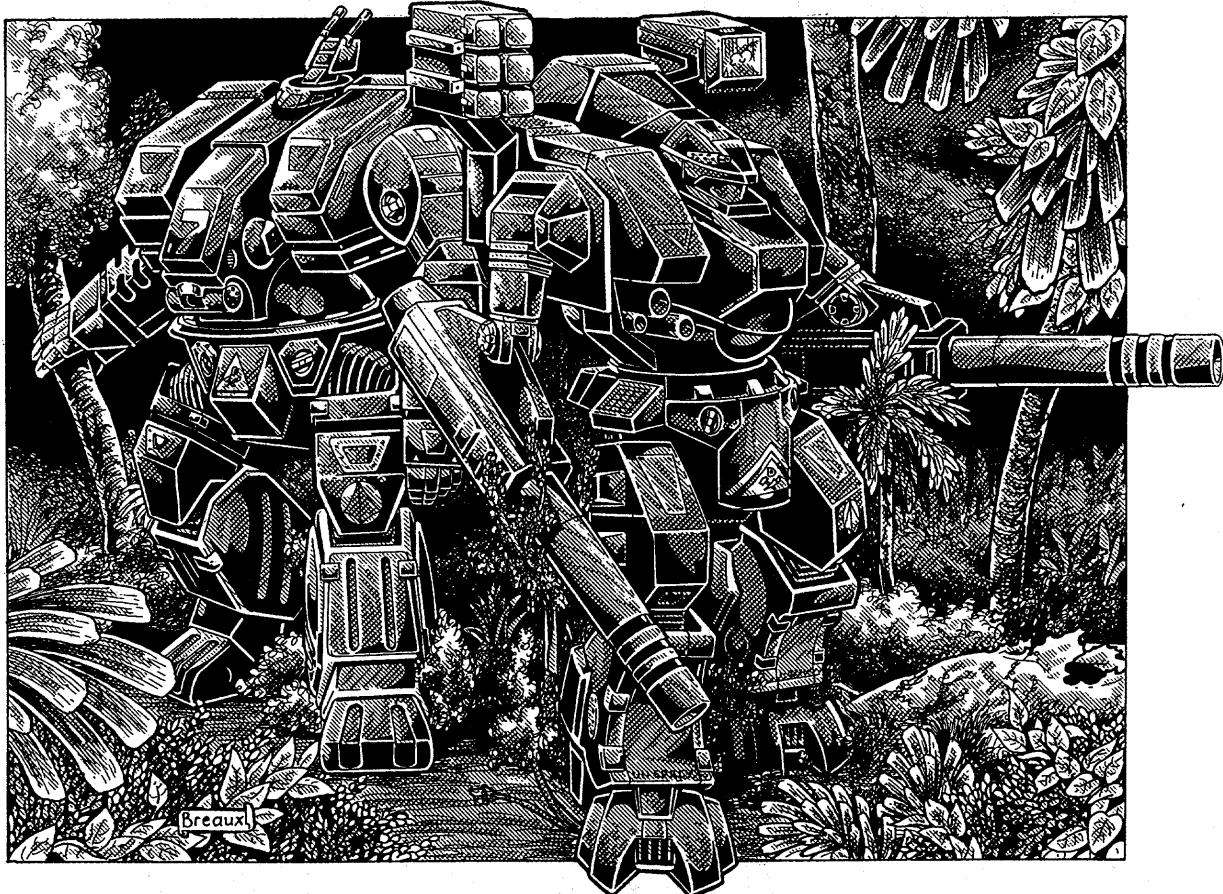
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# Trifling Treasures

Ordinary objects to make treasure extraordinary  
by Halina Adamski

Artwork by P.L. Wolf

**Table I**  
**1d20 Roll**

1-6	Food, Table II
7-10	Plants & Animals, Table III
11-13	Ornaments, Etc., Table IV
14-19	Miscellany, Table V
20	Cryptic Notes, Table VI

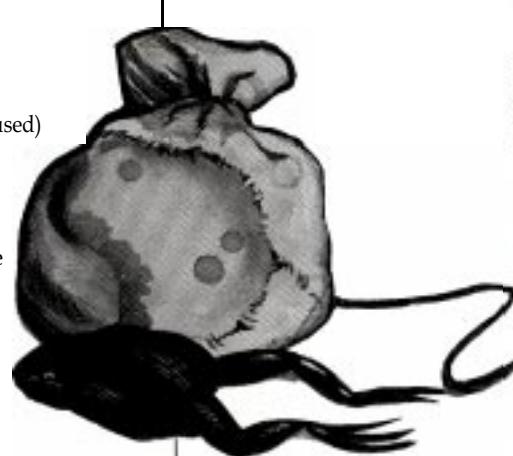
*We search the goblins' purses, pockets, and backpacks. What do we find?"*

*"Well, the biggest one-you figure he's the leader-has one gold and six silvers. The rest have three silvers each."*

**Table II: Food**

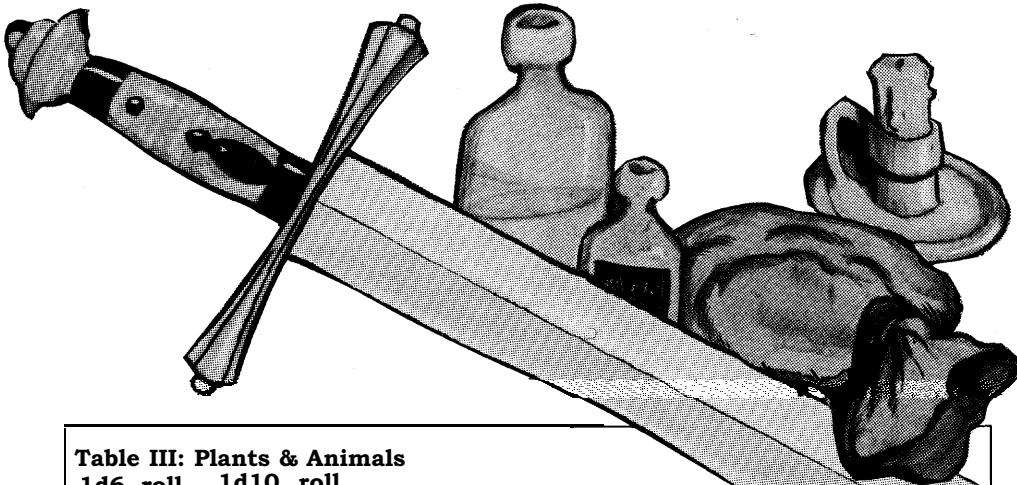
**1d6 roll**

	<b>1d10 roll</b>
1-2	1 A shriveled apple 2 A handful of dried beans 3 A small wicker strainer filled with tea leaves (50% chance used) 4 A small sack of dried fruit 5 Empty nut shells 6 A cookie with a bite taken out 7 Cookie crumbs and a dead beetle 8 A sticky wad of sweet smelling pink goo (hard to scrape from fingers, hair or clothing. If chewed, bubbles can be blown, but 10% chance of contracting disease) 9 A head of garlic 10 A piece of (sticky) hard candy
3-4	1 A dried-out hunk of cheese 2 A heel of stale bread 3 A piece of soggy bread 4 A handful of nuts 5 A hunk of meat or bread crawling with maggots or weevils (DM's choice) 6 A oiled cloth packet containing a chunk of smoked fish 7 A sausage with a bite out 8 Peel from an orange, banana, or other fruit 9 A tin labeled "chocolate covered rot grubs" (contents are dead and harmless) 10 An awful-smelling hunk of blue-green-gray fuzz (somewhere in the center of the mold is a hunk of cheese)
5-6	1 A tiny packet of folded parchment (contains salt or pepper) 2 1d6 rosehips (useful for tea or itching powder) 3 1d6 berries (75% chance 1d4 are smashed) 4 A small wooden bowl with scraps of pork rind and beans stuck to the bottom 5 A small vial (50% labeled "The Feudal Gourmet's Red Dragon Sauce," filled with a red liquid (as hot as it sounds) 6 A small, stoppered clay jar labeled "honey" (half full, honeycomb included) 7 A bag of dried split peas 8 1d6 potion-vials filled with liquid (each contains a different type of cordial or liquor, value 1d3 sp each) 10 1d10 small, translucent red items, of a rubbery texture, shaped like adventurers (mages, rogues, priests, fighters), cherry-flavored



Take a moment to empty your own pockets. What have you got in there? Some money, the stub from a ticket to The Crow, a tattered receipt from the last module you bought, some lint, and—oh, wow!—your missing d10.

Strange that a monster as slovenly as a goblin would have such clean pockets!



**Table III: Plants & Animals**

<b>1d6 roll</b>	<b>1d10 roll</b>
1-3	1 A handful of fur 2 A bruised and faded flower 3 A dead spider 4 A live earwig, normal centipede, or other bug 5 A bit of dry moss (tinder—helpful if it's been raining and the party's tinder is wet) 6 A dead grasshopper 7 A daisy with two petals left 8 A carefully folded parchment packet containing a very pretty dead butterfly 9 1d8 feathers
4-6	10 A handful of burrs stuck to a colorful bit of thread 1 1d8 flies without wings 2 1d6 dead fireflies (20% chance still glowing for 1d4 rounds) 3 1d8 tiny pinecones 4 A snake's shed skin (5% chance intact) 5 A square of cloth wrapped around a bit of dung 6 A cloth packet containing 1d4 tea leaves 7 A handful of bark and leaves 8 The hind foot of a rabbit (50% dyed a vivid color) 9 A dead frog 10 1d3 live mice in a small metal cage

**Table IV: Ornaments, etc.**

<b>1d6 roll</b>	<b>1d10 roll</b>
1-3	1 A brass tin, the lid polished to mirror shine, filled with colored powder and a tiny brush 2 A vial of dark liquid (50% labeled "Vorgadern's Gray-Away," hair dye) 3 A string of tiny glass beads (breaks and scatters when examined) 4 A vial of transparent, foul smelling yellow liquid (cheap perfume—50% labeled "Eau de Troll") 5 A tiny brush and a tin of soft (mustache) wax 6 A broken silver ring with a smashed stone (value 1sp) 7 A bone button with colored thread in the holes 8 A single earring, clay beads strung on copper wire (no value) 9 A handkerchief—clean 10 A handkerchief—monogrammed
4-6	1 A handkerchief—used 2 A black half-face mask 3 A bracelet of tiny brass bells strung on a brass wrist or ankle chain (value 1sp) 4 A lace garter adorned with satin rosebuds 5 A rolled-up pair of filthy, damp, socks 6 A pair of super-thin silk stockings (75% full of runs and holes) 7 A small, rectangular tin containing a stick of black kohl 8 A codpiece of embroidered, but filthy velvet 9 A wig (DM's choice of hairstyle and color) 10 A strip of cloth an armspan long, 3" wide

Filling NPCs' pockets with a few worthless oddments makes the monsters seem more real, and their treasure hoards less mundane. Take a generic bugbear. Maybe he's got eight coppers, 14 silvers, and two gold. So what? But add a daisy with two petals left (she loves him . . . she loves him not . . .); "Wow, poor guy, unlucky at love, unlucky at war." Suddenly you have a monster with personality.

Trifling treasures are not meant to advance the plot or give clues to the PCs. Far from it! Use them as red herrings to drive players crazy. What lock does that minotaur's key open? Who's the "Gargolina" that the ogre's note mentions? Of course, some objects can be used as jumping-off points for new adventures. But by not using them that way all the time, the DM gives his players a view of a larger, more realistic campaign universe, where not everything directly affects or is affected by the PCs.

I've used the following system in my own campaign for two years. My players love it. Their PCs' pockets and backpacks are filled with weird things. These treasures provide plenty of role-playing: "Cookies? I scarf them down before the halfling can grab them." "Gorg, that ribbon really is your color!"

Once in a while these items even come in handy. Some can be used as spell components, but how about the party's evil nemesis slipping on a strategically placed sliver of soap? Imagine the thief PC, confronted by a guard patrol, using that wig and perfume to disguise himself as one of the queen's ladies in waiting. Sell the party a leaky boat, but allow them to be saved from sinking (and drowning) by a wad of bubble gum.

The tables are designed with simplicity in mind. Roll 1d20, 1d6, and 1d10 and consult the table. You can throw in as many "useless" items from the charts as you like, but one or two items for each monster and a maximum of ten items for a communal hoard should be enough. Though intended for fantasy role-playing games (RPGs), a little work can convert the following tables for use in games ranging from the TOP SECRET/S.I.<sup>TM</sup> system to FASA's SHADOWRUN\* game. Just throw in a disposable lighter, a pocket protector, or a can of hair spray.

The DM is encouraged to add to the tables, especially "Cryptic notes" entries from which shouldn't appear more than once. Using 1d6 and 1d10 rather than 1d100 makes this easier by allowing the DM to expand the tables in blocks of 10.

Now let's check those goblin's pockets again:

*"The first one has three silvers and some empty nut shells. The second has three slimy silvers and a leaky half-full vial labeled sword oil.' It makes your fingers greasy. You pull a piece of cloth from the third one's pocket. Looks like a hankie . . . and, it's been used."*

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**Table V: Miscellany**

	<b>1d6 roll</b>	<b>1d10 roll</b>
1	1 1d6 small painted wooden blocks	
	2 A pair of six-sided bone dice	
	3 Six oddly shaped bone dice	
	4 A needle and thread	
	5 Two fish hooks with a 5' coil of string	
	6 Flint and steel	
	7 A brightly painted gourd with a stick attached	
	8 A corkscrew	
	9 A tiny vial (10% labeled "Fairy Dust") filled with glitter (mica and colored sand)	
	10 A tiny sliver of soap	
2	1 A whetstone	
	2 1d6 pretty pebbles (no value)	
	3 A brass key (fits no known lock)	
	4 A playing card—ace of stones	
	5 Three 1" red-painted wooden discs	
	6 A reed whistle	
	7 A miniature lead figure of an adventurer (25% each fighter, mage, priest, rogue)	
	8 A broken glass vial (PC must pass a Dexterity check or take 1 hp damage)	
	9 A small rectangle of copper with a line of raised numbers punched into it, engraved on the copper is "Waterdhavian Express: Don't leave the keep without it."	
	10 A prayerbook (deity of DM's choice)	
3	1 A bit of partially started crochet with a crochet hook and a piece of yarn	
	2 A small loop of string with a knot tied in it	
	3 A snapped bowstring	
	4 A red stocking containing a piece of coal	
	5 A box of white talc, labeled "Vorgadern's Famous Medicated Foot-Powder"	
	6 A small length of copper wire (long enough to act as impromptu handcuffs)	
	7 A half-burnt stick of incense	
	8 1d8 clay marbles in a leather bag	
	9 A dart	
	10 A drinking horn (still smells of ale)	
4	1 A leaky, half-full vial of sword oil	
	2 1d6 crudely carved wooden chess pieces	
	3 A lock of hair tied with a ribbon	
	4 A small rag doll resembling a bear	
	5 A piece of chalk	
	6 1d3 nails	
	7 A handful of sand	
	8 A scrap of leather	
	9 A broken quill pen	
	10 A pipe and a small pouch of pipeweek	
5	1 1d4 candle stubs, providing 2 rounds of light each	
	2 A handful of lint	
	3 A bloodstained bandage	
	4 A wooden token "Good for 1 free drink in The Bowels of the Earth"	
	5 A gilded copper piece (actual value 1 cp)	
	6 An arrowhead attached to a broken shaft	
	7 Toenail clippings	
	8 A small tin containing a horrid-smelling white paste (50% labeled "Vorgadern's Super-Strength Skunk-Oil Healer."	
	9 A roll of string (1d4' long)	
	10 A miniature portrait of a very attractive member of the same race, but opposite sex of the bearer	
6	1 A broken tortoise shell comb	
	2 A citronella candle	
	3 A stick of sealing wax	
	4 A piece of vellum with a square grid drawn on it	
	5 A 10' length of string with knots at 1' intervals	
	6 A small wicker basket	
	7 A pair of spectacles with broken lenses	
	8 A pig's bladder bearing the painted message "Joyous Day of Birth"	
	9 A small leather collar with a brass medallion hanging from it, with "Vicious" engraved thereon	
	10 A twisted metal fork	

**Table VI: Cryptic notes**

<b>1d6 roll</b>	<b>1d10 roll</b>
1-3	1 "Take the first wight after the well."
	2 A half-written letter to a lady
	3 "Triia Redbunting, Number Four, Street of the Swords, Waterdeep"
	4 A colored chalk drawing of a red dragon
	5 "Meet me under the bridge at midnight."
	6 "Floor show & Dinner at Dareena's."
	7 An appointment calendar
	8 "Gargolina is looking for you."
	9 A religious pamphlet (75% of a PC's rival or enemy faith)
	10 "Flour, eggs, a barrel of pickled fish, ten yards Widow Othry's cloth—pink or yellow, a new yoke for the mule . . . (a shopping list)
4-6	1 A smeared note "Ungodly treasure!" is the only legible part
	2 A pamphlet detailing local gossip
	3 "I'd try the yellow powder."
	4 The note contains 1d4 rather stupid puns or jokes, which the DM should detail
	5 "Three steps right. Three steps forward. Spin around. Five steps forward, bending low. Jump back." (dance instructions, but could be mistaken for treasure directions)
	6 A recipe for "Chocolate Covered Rot Grubs in Port"
	7 A "Last Will and Testament."
	8 The NPC's family tree
	9 "The object in question is at the miller's."
	10 Song lyrics (15% referring to a quest the PCs had been on previously)

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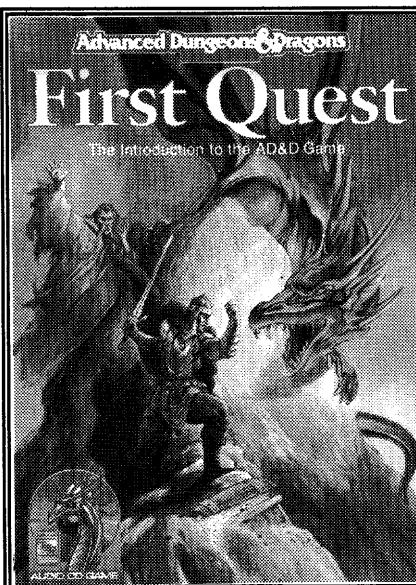
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# Convention Calendar

## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, PO. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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**Important:** DRAGON® Magazine no longer publishes phone numbers for conventions. Publishing incorrect numbers is always possible and is a nuisance to both the caller and those receiving the misdirected call. Be certain that any address given is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

## ARCANACON XII, July 7-10

This convention will be held at the Collingwood Education Centre in Melbourne. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: ARCANACON, P.O. Box 125, Parkville, Vic, 3052 AUSTRALIA.

## ORIGINS '94, July 7-10

This convention will be held at the McEnery Convention Center in San Jose, Calif. Guests include Larry Niven and Steven Barnes. Events include scores of role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Write to: ORIGINS '94, P.O. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240.

## POLARISCON 3, July 8-10

This convention will be held at the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, demos, videos, dealers, an art show, and a masquerade. Registration: \$25. Write to: POLARISCON 3, c/o Time, Space, & Fantasy, Inc., PO. Box 8908, Lake St. Station, Minneapolis MN 55408.

## V-KHAN, July 8-10

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Guests include Andrew J. Offutt. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, plus an art show and auction. Registration: \$15 before June 30; \$20 thereafter. Write to: V-KHAN, 695 South 8th St. #55, Colorado Springs CO 80905.

## WINDSOR GAMEFEST XII, July 8-10

This convention will be held at the University

of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$11 (U.S.)/weekend or \$6/day. Write to: Windsor Board and Role-playing Soc., c/o University of Windsor, 401 Sunset Ave., Windsor, Ontario, CANADA N9B 3P4.

## LEGENDS-KNOXVILLE '94, July 9 TN

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Northwest in Knoxville, Tenn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Entertainment Group, 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

## THOMAS COLLEGE MICRO-CON, July 9 GA

This convention will be held on the Thomas College campus in Thomasville, Ga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, videos, and open gaming. Write to: MICRO-CON, c/o Michael Taylor, 123 Greenleaf Lane, Thomasville GA 31792.

## DRAGON CON '94, July 15-17

This convention will be held at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Barbara G. Young, Harlan Ellison, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and Clyde Caldwell. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, seminars, demos, computer games, movies, and comics programming. Registration: \$45. Write to: DRAGON CON '94, PO. Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362-0696.

## NONCON '94, July 15-17

This convention will be held at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: NONCON, PO. Box 328, Carina, Qld, 4152 AUSTRALIA.

## QUINCON IX, July 15-17

This convention will be held at the Signature Room at Franklin Square in Quincy, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ events and special guests. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$5/day. Send an SASE: QUINCON IX, c/o Mark Hoskins, 1181 Pratt St., Barry IL 62312.

## GOBBLECON 3, July 16

This convention will be held at the Easton Inn in Easton, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a game raffle, contests, and door prizes. Registration: \$10. Send a long SASE to: Mike Griffith, 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091.

## GRAND GAME CON '94, July 16-17 MI

This convention will be held at American Legion Post #179 in Grand Rapids, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures

\* indicates an Australian convention.  
\*\* indicates a Canadian convention.  
\*\*\* indicates a European convention.

games. Other activities include RPGA™ events. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$6/day preregistered; \$7/day on site. Write to: John Edelman, 31 Carlton SE, Grand Rapids MI 49506.

#### **ARCEECON '94, July 23**

IL

This convention will be held at Leisure Hours R/C Raceway in Joliet, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include demos, a silent auction, and anime. Registration: \$5, game fees: \$2. Write to: Leisure Hours Hobbies, 2872 Plainfield Rd., Joliet IL 60435.

#### **CON-DOME '94, July 29-31**

This convention will be held at the Danish Technical University Lyngby. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a painting workshop. Registration: 80 Danish kroner. Write to: CON-DOME, c/o Mark Denninger, Kollegiekakken 1-C212, DK-2800 Lyngby, DENMARK.

#### **GAMES DAY '94, July 30**

MD

This GW convention will be held at Tall Cedars Hall in Baltimore, Md. Guests include Jes Goodwin, Dave Gallagher, and Andy Chambers. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include the GOLDEN DEMON miniatures-painting competition. Registration: \$3 preregistered; \$5 on site. Write to: Games Workshop Mail Order, 3431-C Benson Ave., Baltimore MD 21227-1072.

#### **LEGENDS-NASHVILLE '94, July 30**

TN

This convention will be held at the Shoney's Inn in Nashville, Tenn. Events include role-

playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Entertainment Group, 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

#### **UMF-CON XIV, Aug. 1-3**

ME

This convention will be held at the University of Maine-Farmington in Farmington, Maine. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$8 preregistered; \$12 on site. Single-day rates vary. Write to: Table Gaming Club, 5 South St., UMF, Farmington ME 04938; or e-mail: if15159@maine.maine.edu (be sure to include your mailing address).

#### **GAMEFEST XV, Aug. 10-14**

CA

This convention will be held at Old Towne in San Diego, Cal. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include trivia and figure-painting contests. Registration: \$20 before July 30; \$30 on site. Write to: GAMEFEST, 3954 Harney St., San Diego CA 92110.

#### **DALLASCON '94, Aug. 19-21**

TX

This convention will be held at Sheraton Grand Hotel in Irving, Tex. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, auctions, videos, and seminars. Write to: DALLASCON, P.O. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.

#### **BUBONICON '94, Aug. 26-28**

NM

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson East in Albuquerque, N.M. Guests include Mike Stackpole, Liz Danforth, and Simon Hawke. Events include role-playing,

board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, an art show, readings, films, and a masquerade. Registration: \$21 before Aug. 10; \$25 on site. Write to: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque NM 87176.

#### **DEMICON 5, Aug. 26-28**

MD

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Conference Hotel in Towson, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, a games auction, dealers, and a painted-miniatures contest. Registration: \$20 before June 30; \$25 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Harford Adventure Soc., c/o The Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Rd., Bel Air MD 21014.

#### **OMEGACON 2, Aug. 26-28**

FL

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Universal Tower in Orlando, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an artists' workshop, dealers, videos, and door prizes. Registration: \$5 preregistered; \$10 on site. Send an SASE to: John Martello, OMEGACON 2, 3415 Silverwood Dr., Pine Hills FL 32808-2847.

#### **SIOUX CITY CON IX, Sep. 2-4**

IA

This convention will be held at the Hilton in Sioux City, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Registration: \$10. Write to: M.A.G.E., 820 N. Dakota Ave., Sioux Falls, IA 57104.

#### **TEXICON '94, Sep. 2-5**

TX

This convention will be held at the Westchase

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Hilton in Houston Tex. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, open gaming, and an auction. Registration: \$20 before Aug. 13; \$25 thereafter. Write to: TEXICON, P.O. Box 631462, Houston TX 77263-1462.

#### **WAR!ZONE NORTH '94, Sep. 2-5**

This convention will be held at the Embassy Suites at Baymeadows in Jacksonville, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a flea market, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered; \$19/weekend or \$7/day on site. Write to: WAR!ZONE NORTH, c/o Wolf Ent., P.O. Box 1256, DeLand FL 32721-1256.

#### **LEGENDS-GAINESVILLE, Sep. 3-4 GA**

This convention will be held inside Lakeshore Mall in Gainesville, Ga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and movies. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Ent. Group Inc., 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

#### **STAR DREAM I, Sep. 8-11**

This *Star Trek* convention will be held in the Congress Centre Rosengarten in Mannheim, Germany. Highlights include 16 stars of the series, videos, exhibitions, and filking. Write to: *Star Trek* Fan Club-Enterprise, c/o S. Strybuc, Hans Sachs Ring 17, 68199 Mannheim-Niederfeld, GERMANY.

#### **NORMAN CONQUEST 5, Sep. 9-11 OK**

This convention will be held at the O.U. Student Union in Norman, Okla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ Network events. Registration: \$5 preregistered before Aug. 31; \$9/weekend or \$4/day on site. Write to: Room 215-A, OMU, 900 Asp Ave., Norman OK 73019.

#### **SHORECON '94, Sep. 9-11 NJ**

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Eatontown Hotel and Conference Center in Eatontown, N.J. Guests include Jim Hlavaty, Len Kaminski, and Jeff Menges. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a game auction, a charity raffle, dances, seminars, signings, and movies. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 on site. Write to: Multigenre Inc., 142 South St., Unit 9C, Red Bank NJ 07701-2502; or e-mail at: acd@hotld.att.com.

#### **MAELSTROM 1.75, Sep. 10 NE**

This convention will be held at the City Campus Building in Lincoln, Nebr. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$5. Write to: MAELSTROM 1.75, c/o Chris Dekalb, 6015 Huntington, Lincoln NE 68507.

#### **ANDCON '94, Sep. 15-18 OH**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Independence in Independence, Ohio. Guests include Jean Rabe and Darwin Bromley. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ Network events, computer gaming, and an auction. Registration: \$19.95/weekend. Daily and visitor passes available. Write to: Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240.

#### **AMERICON '94, Sep. 17-18 NJ**

This convention will be held at the Clayton American Legion Hall in Clayton, N.J. Events

include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, an auction, and a charity tournament. Registration: \$11 preregistered before Aug. 15; \$12 on site. Most game fees are \$2. Dealers and GMs are welcome. Write to: AMERICON, c/o Carl "Thunder", P.O. Box 125, Mullica Hill, NJ 08062.

#### **GATEWAY 14, Sep. 22-25 CA**

This convention will be held at Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include flea markets, an auction, and dealers. Registration: \$25 preregistered; \$30 on site. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849.

#### **COGCON II, Sep. 23-25 MO**

This convention will be held at the Miner Rec. Building on the campus of the University of Missouri in Rolla, Mo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ events and a miniatures-painting contest. GMs are welcome. Registration: \$8 before Sep. 1; \$10 thereafter. Write to: GEAR, PO. Box 1939, Rolla MO 65401; or e-mail: gear@albert.nuc.umr.edu.

#### **FOX CON '94, Sep. 23-25 IL**

This convention will be held at the Larsen Middle School in Elgin, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, anime, and a silent auction. Send an SASE to: Mike Woodward, 636 Center St., Elgin IL 60120.

#### **KALIEDOSCOPE '94, Sep. 23-25 VA**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Lynchburg, Vir. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$15 before Sep. 7; \$20 on site. Write to: LSFA, 300 Harrison St., Lynchburg VA 24504.

#### **KENNEL CON '94, Sep. 24-25 HI**

This convention will be held at the U.S.O. at Fort DeRussy, Waikiki, Hawaii. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include anime. Registration: \$3, plus small

game fees. Write to: KENNEL CON, c/o Eric Kline, P.O. Box 90182, Honolulu HI 96835-0182.

#### **LEGENDS-ATLANTA, Sep. 24 GA**

This convention will be held at Days Inn North in Marietta, Ga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$2. Write to: Legends Ent. Group Inc., 514 Broad St., Rome GA 30161.

#### **DIRE CONSEQUENCES II CT**

##### **Sep. 30-Oct. 2 CT**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnsons in Plainville, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ Network events, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$15, plus \$2 per game. Write to: DIRE CONSEQUENCES, P.O. Box 251, Bristol CT 06011-0251.

#### **GEN CON® Game Fair 1994**

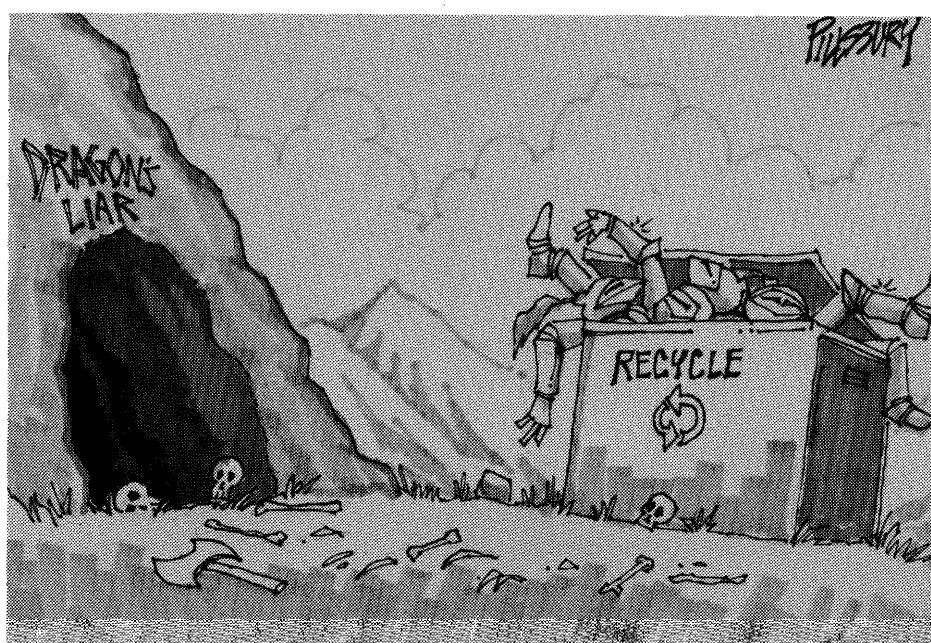
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By Joseph Pillsbury

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# The Magic of Karameikos

by Jeff Grubb

Artwork by Dan Frazier

## The visitor's return

He came back, of course. As short as he was the first time and resembling a flour dumpling, albeit a dumpling dressed in calf-long pants, a billowy white silk shirt, and suspenders. He was standing on my desk when I came back from lunch, his fur-covered feet knocking my carefully stacked piles of debris over each other, as he checked out my bookshelves.

"Hello, Joshuan," I said, not bothering to ask about how he got past the receptionist. Joshuan Gallidox beamed a smile that

would put the lights of Chicago's Loop a distant second. "It's good to see you again, lad."

I grunted some semi-polite response and fired up my computer. As the Mac ratcheted through its list of start-up extensions, I looked up to see him still examining my reference texts.

"Searching for something in particular," I asked, "Or just browsing?"

Joshuan beamed me another ear-to-ear grin (and I resolved to do a complete inventory of the belongings in my office). "I

was wondering where you kept your spellbooks," he said.

It was my turn to grin. "I don't cast spells, I merely describe them."

The hin ignored my subtle irony. "You should get some. Just a few to liven up the place, to show you're serious about all this. I happen to have a few, available at a low cost."

"Uh-huh," I said, as the main menu finally popped up on my screen. "How is it that a hin has magical tomes that he cannot normally use?"

"I never told you about my experiences at the Karameikan School of Magecraft?" he said, sitting on the edge of my desk, swinging his feet back and forth. "I haven't mentioned the wonders that can be found there?"

"No," I grimaced, firing up the word-processing program. "But I know you will."

He did, and I hereby pass the information on to you.

## The ruins of Krakatos

Krakatos itself was a pile of tumbled stone long before the first Thyatian invasion, and is believed to date back to the days of the beastmen. Local legends from nearby Mirros have assigned original construction of the pile to the lord of the beastmen, various Traladaran warlords, even the ancient and mysterious Nithians. Indeed, there are elements of all these cultures in the wreckage, but this does not prove that the ruins are of one particular age. The ruins were used by the Plunderers (see below), and as such contained a hodgepodge of different buildings, statues looted from other sites, and treasure from many ancient tombs.

The contents have been depleted by other raiders over the years, but the ruins remained a common meeting spot for dark forces, and often a lair for monsters. The pattern in this was established early: The ruins would be "cleaned out" by adventurers; then slowly wandering creatures would filter in, seeking refuge from the surrounding human communities and using the ruins as a base of operations. Eventually, enough creatures would accumulate so that one powerful individual would take command of the operation, and begin organizing strikes against the human settlements. Then the humans would gather a group of heroes to defend themselves, and the process would begin again. These self-styled "Lords of the Ru-



<b>1. School of Magecraft</b>	<b>8. The Succubus Shack</b>
<b>2. Library Building</b>	<b>9. The King Stefan</b>
<b>3. Elevated Bridge</b>	<b>10. Mog's Pub and Breakfast</b>
<b>4. Outbuildings</b>	<b>11. Watchtower</b>
<b>5. Terari's Residence</b>	<b>12. Society of Wands</b>
<b>6. The Wizard's Eye</b>	<b>13. The Mage's Statue</b>
<b>7. Caravan Grounds</b>	



ins" have included mind flayers, rogue wizards, one or two liches, and in one short-lived case, a red dragon.

With the founding of the Grand Duchy (now Kingdom) of Karameikos, Stefan increased the frequency of sweeps through the wreckage as a pre-emptive measure. As a result, the monstrous population never had a chance to recover. However, as most of the treasure vaults have long since been pillaged, finding volunteers interested in the ruins has been more difficult.

In 1010, Stefan solved the matter by declaring the ruins the new home of the Karameikan School of Magecraft (also called by some the Karameikan College of Magic, though the former is the official name). The old Magicians' Guild of Specularum had grown past its physical limitations, and there had been problems with the results of some magical experiments stalking the streets of the capital. Aided by the wandering wizard Terari, Stefan had the school constructed in record time, using the original ruins as a base. Now Stefan has the advantage of an organized school of magic within his borders, situated at the site of potential problems. If there is truly some form of magical gate

beneath Krakatos as the Plunderers may have discovered, Karameikos now has a spell-wielding force right on the gate's doorstep.

### History of magic

Magic in Karameikos has been a haphazard affair over the years. Once, during the Traladar Golden Age, there were said to be great wizards who established blessed realms of peace and harmony, but who fell before the might of the beastmen. Like most tales of the Golden Age, the truth of these matters remains inconclusive, but the very existence of these tales encourages Karameikan adventurers to search out lost tombs and old ruins in the hope of finding such a wizards keep, laden heavily with magic.

Traditional Traladar spell-casters have since learned their spells the old-fashioned way: through hard apprenticeships and grueling taskmasters. A young student with promise would be taken on by the local hedge wizard and, after many years of cleaning cauldrons, searching out spell components, and aiding in incantations, the youth would be taught a few of the simpler spells from the wizards repertoire. Such a state of affairs was chancy at

best—a promising student might not have a wizard in the area, or said wizard might not take pupils or already have more than she wanted (such a state of affairs might have accounted for the notably intelligent Traladar heroes of yore—in a more civilized world, they might have become wizards, leaving the field of Warlords to those stronger in muscle and weaker in mind).

With the founding of modern cities such as Marilenev (later called Specularum and now known as Mirros), the situation for the most part continued. However, in larger cities, the wizards (those who could tolerate each other, at least) began to gather in particular taverns on the south side of the city. This was the beginning of the Wizards Guild, which would later become the Magicians' Guild of Specularum. The allied mages eventually bought their own building in a co-operative venture—a site where they could pool their resources, conduct group investigations, and wield some measure of political power. The Guild weathered the initial Thyatian invasion and the later creation of Karameikos, and King Stefan's succession from Thyatis.

In addition to gathering resources, the Magicians' Guild also pooled their resourc-

es in regards to apprentices. It became more cost-effective to have the best illusionist of the senior mages teach the young apprentices about illusions, the most proficient in necromantic spells about animating skeletons, and so on. Instead of a single mage with a single pupil, Karameikos saw the rise of small classes of apprentices who learned from a group of wiser heads, and received a more standardized education. This process was duplicated in many civilized nations, most notably Glantri, the self-proclaimed kingdom of magic. The Magicians' Guild received the unofficial approval of the Karameikan government, and was used as a resource by the government as a source of both magical power and young mages.

One of the attractions of the Magicians' Guild, its location in Karameikos' largest city, was its downfall. Such a collection of powerful (and often egotistical or secretive) mages in one location created great potential for conflict. The final straw was the creation of a mechanical beholder by one of the more advanced apprentices,

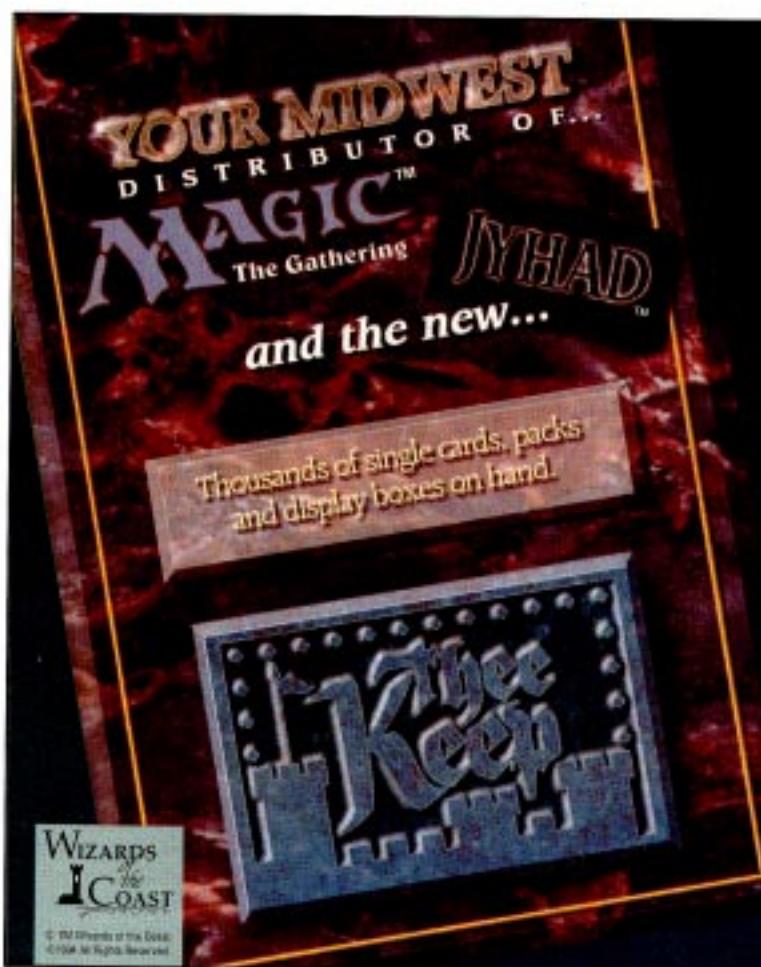
powered by an Immortals artifact. The resulting creation was turned loose in downtown Specularum, leveling a good section of the South End. The creation was defeated by the head of the Magicians' Guild, Teldon, but at great cost. Both mage and monster disappeared in a pure white ball of fire, and while they are assumed to have both been destroyed, they may instead have been teleported to some far-off location. The fact remained that the Magicians' Guild proved itself too dangerous to remain in Specularum, and lost one of its most valuable supporters.

About this time Stefan, confronted with both the continual cost of keeping Krakatos clear of monsters and the potential dangers of a large concentration of wizards in the capital, decided to found an official college of spellcraft a safe distance away from the city. The selection of the site killed two birds with one stone. The Magicians' Guild of Mirros remains in the capital, but its libraries and research facilities have moved to the new site. The Guild no longer takes on students, and has be-

come the equivalent of a Gentlemen's Club for Wizards.

Instrumental to the selection of the site was the actions of the wizard Terari, who had been working with Teldon for the year before his death. A surprisingly modest and humorous mage, Terari kept the individual Guild members from going their separate ways with Teldon's death, and recruited many of them to instruct at the new college, as well as selecting the site and overseeing the construction (which used a number of magical methods in building). In return, King Stefan appointed Terari Karameikos' first Minister of Magic, as well as Headmaster of the school.

The school has high entrance requirements, and most of its pupils are extremely intelligent (INT score of 16+), with a smattering of favorite sons and scions of nobility. They operate on a three-year term, with a freshman class of some 200 students, of which 30-40 normally graduate. The school normally takes young people on the verge of their Shearing (a Karameikan coming-of-age ceremony).



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ny) but also will take older students. At the end of this period, individuals are awarded a standard spell book of first-level spells and sent into the world. Some stay on for "post-graduate" work, and many continue to return to the magical college in later life to share what they have discovered, to research, to learn new spells, and to teach.

### The town of Krakatos

The ruins of Krakatos are situated on a rocky bluff overlooking the Highreach River, just north of where the Eastron road crosses that flow. The original ruins have been razed and the towers of the College built there. The majority of the former underground monstrous lairs have been flushed out and are used for storage. (During this process, there was no reported discovery of any magical or extradimensional gates.)

The college was erected in red shale, and is referred to by Emilio the Thespian as the Towers of the Dawn of Magic (and as "The Flamers" by less reverent students). The design, created by Terari and approved by King Stefan, has an almost alien feel, similar neither to the solid construction of Traladararan buildings nor the rococo embellishments of Thyatian architecture. If the slanting spires resemble anything, they look like designs from the once magical (and now sunken) island nation of Alphatia.

The College consists of two large spires joined by an overhead ramp and a number of smaller outbuildings (also of red shale). The larger of the two buildings is the college proper, which contains classrooms, quarters, and offices for the instructors, quarters for the resident students (who exchange residence fees for grunt-work cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry). The entire first floor is a great stone hall, which is used for student gatherings, major lectures, and demonstrations. The highest part of the spires is used as an observatory and atmospheric lab, and from its peak one can see Mirros itself.

The smaller of the two structures is the library, separated from the main building in case of magical misadventure but connected by an upper-level bridge. The library contains histories and legends of Karameikos and its neighbors, as well as scribes and calligraphers for creating more books. Duplicates so generated are then traded with other private and governmental libraries in Glantri for new materials. Travel journals of adventurers and old texts left behind by heirless wizards also are kept here. Magical texts (and those containing information that might be

useful in spell-casting) are kept in a separate vault under the eyes (it is said) of unsleeping magical guards. This last may just be bragging, but as yet no rogue has dared to test the strength of this claim.

There are a number of outbuildings, which ring the north side of the spires, away from the town. These are used for magical research and teaching spells that inflict great damage at a distance (*fireballs* and *lightning bolts* are regularly fired out across the Highreach, though never when boat traffic is present). Some towers are assigned to visiting wizards and adventurers that the Deans are uncomfortable with quartering in the towers. Terari himself maintains a private, three-story tower among these outbuildings.

The School of Magecraft is headed by Master Terari, but most of the instruction is carried out by a group of learned wizards (given the title Dean), and the older students who have graduated but remained for a more cloistered life. The college is still new, such that it has not stratified into particular (rival) departments, and the Deans teach according to their specialty, concentrating on the Primer spells (see below). There are currently four full-time Deans and a half-dozen Honorary Deans (who are adventurers who serve as visiting professors). Exact levels are unknown, but the Deans will be likely at least 9th and no more than 15th level. The graduate students will usually be of 5th to 9th level.

The school of magic moved out of Mirros in part to avoid endangering ordinary citizens, so naturally some of those citizens have moved out with it. An un-walled community has grown up at the foot of the college, away from the river but perched near the intersection of the Eastron road and the King's road. This community was started by restaurateurs, washerwomen, and vendors catering to the academics, but their success in turn has encouraged other merchants to settle, especially those with dealings along the main roads. Finally, there are those students who can afford to live "off campus" and have their own apartments above the shops. These apartments are usually little more than cold-water flats, but occupied by young nobles and those who can afford to spend their spare time researching as opposed to laboring in the college mess. (Those students who work in the spires have a different view, of course; they feel that the "independents" spend all their free time wenching and partying when not under adult supervision.)

This community, known to the natives as New Town, Krakatos Town, or just The

Town, has prospered, such that there have been complaints from the townsmen about the students' wild parties and damage from magical experiments gone wild. The Deans have to date tried to restrain their students through counseling and strict curfews, but are less than sympathetic to the gripes of individuals who moved out in the first place to benefit from the proximity of the college.

Some of the features of New Town include:  
*The Wizard's Eye:* This is the local college hang-out for the undergraduates—the instructors would not be caught dead in here. It is managed by a trio of hin brothers: Oslo, Kanjo, and Threedo Haulwater, who are on good terms with the Deans.

*Caravan Grounds:* Here is where the late-afternoon caravans stop for the night (those who pass through earlier in the day usually make directly for Mirros, or have just left there). There is usually a small tent-market in the mornings, and students and college cooks shop for fresh foods here.

*The Succubus Shack:* A continual source of trouble for the College, the Shack is a seamy dive close to the caravan grounds, and its proprietor, Rangor Welsh, claims that he caters only to the merchant traffic. As his establishment offers hard liquor, questionable inhalants, and exotic dancers (both male and female), it has been a magnet for younger mages. The Shack has been officially proclaimed off limits to the student body, which of course only increases its popularity. Any student caught there (and yes, the Deans will ask the town watch to check from time to time) will face a stern lecture and (at least) two weeks in the laundry room.

*The King Stefan:* One of the larger buildings in town, it is famed for its common room. The main eating hall consists of a main floor (where the ordinary townsmen, adventurers, and students eat) and an elevated mezzanine overlooking the entire floor on three sides. This mezzanine is reserved solely for government officials and the Deans (and their guests). College gossip being what it is, no one dines on the Dean's Balcony without everyone in town hearing about it. There are smaller apartments on the upper floor.

*Mog's Pub and Breakfast:* This is the main adventurer's hangout in town, and consists of a common room with two floors of rooms above it. Founded by a former rogue who found better dealings elsewhere, it has been sold to a Mirros merchant named Sylvia Galamar. She is running the place for the time being, but looking for a full-time proprietor. She never changed the name of the pub, and

no, Mog's has never served breakfast (most adventurers sleep in, anyway).

**Watchtower:** The official government presence in New Town, it is the home of the town militia and jail. Most crimes in the town are related to public drunkenness and foolish pranks, but the militia is aware that anyone they encounter can be a mage, and as such the tower also has a warning bell out front to signal the mages in the spires. There is a move afoot to give Krakatos a real Townmaster. If this occurs, the Watchtower will be expanded to serve as the city hall.

**The Society of Wands:** The first (and only, so far) fraternal organization in Krakatos, the Society of Wands is open to students of both sexes and all races. The Society was founded by Amanda Po, a successful adventurer and graduate student who built her own townhouse, then turned it over to the other students when she felt the urge to explore the Northern Reaches. (There has been no word on her for many months now.) It is very proud of its academic prowess and boasts of the imagination and creativity of its members. Its members identify each other by code words and a secret hand-sign.

**The Mage's Statue:** A contribution of Terari to the town, this statue was carved from a solid block of obsidian, and depicts Teldon battling the clockwork beholder. Plaques mounted on the base are dedicated to Teldon and other mages who have given their lives in service to the nation and the College.

Joshuan Gallidox finished his recitation and smiled, "So," he said, "you want to buy a Karameikan Spell Primer?"

"You still haven't explained where you got it," said I.

The hin shrugged. "College kids lose things—leave 'em behind in bars and stuff. This is my fault?" Again the smile. "Unless, of course, you were thinking of going there yourself to pick one up."

"Magical college students, pranks, experiments, and a magical gate that may or may not be there," I said. "Sounds like a dangerous place to hang out."

"That it is," said Joshuan, pulling out the book from his rucksack. "It most definitely is."

## The Plunderers

The name "Plunderers" has been adopted by a number of adventuring groups and military societies in Karameikos over the years. The original Plunderers were a group of Traladar heroes who operated several generations after the war against the beastmen. While other warriors and

### The Karameikan Spell Primer

#### First-level spells

Charm Person  
Detect Magic  
*Enlarge*  
Feather Fall  
Hold Portal  
Identify  
*Light*  
Magic Missile  
Read Magic  
Shield  
Shocking Grasp  
Sleep

#### Second-level spells

Darkness, 15' radius  
*Detect Evil*  
Detect Invisibility  
Flaming Sphere  
Invisibility  
*Knock*  
Levitate  
Magic Mouth  
Mirror Image  
Stinking Cloud  
Web  
Wizard Lock

#### Third-level spells

Clairvoyance  
Dispel Magic  
Explosive Runes  
Fireball  
Fly  
Haste  
Hold Person  
Infravision  
Lightning Bolt  
Slow  
Suggestion  
*Water Breathing*

wizards of the time were establishing themselves as warlords and self-proclaimed barons, the Plunderers were united by their drive for treasure, not power. They raided across the length of Karameikos and across the border into Thyatis and the Hin territories.

Initially, their attacks were concentrated on old ruins, which they would clear out with military efficiency, pillaging the treasures of old and returning them to their lair at Krakatos, which itself was an old ruin. As these attacks disposed of a great deal of evil creatures inhabiting these ruins, they were viewed as heroes. However, as the known treasure sites were emptied, the Plunderers began turning on the other local lords, demanding tribute and assaulting travelers.

Three separate armies, led by one of the Marilenev family, besieged Krakatos and demanded their surrender. What happened next is questionable—some say that the Marilenev forces attacked as a body, or one of the armies rebelled and assaulted the ruins, or that there was a falling out among the Plunderers themselves. What is known is that a powerful force from the Lower Planes was loosed at Krakatos that day, and destroyed both the Plunderers and most of their besiegers. Farmers in the area to this day turn up the odd amulet or broken skull when plowing their fields. Of the great treasure the Plunderers acquired, nothing known remains.

Several adventuring groups in Karameikos have taken the name Plunderers to signify their intention to gain wealth. The most recent were a group of Thyatian youths who announced their intention to "Locate and defeat the Great Dragon of the Dymrak." They entered that woods and have not been seen since.

#### Karameikan spell primer

A graduate of the Karameikan School of Spellcraft is awarded, on graduation, a standard book of spells created expressly

for that purpose (often by "graduate students") who remain within the college hierarchy. This primer consists only of the first-level spells on Table One. Should a graduate choose to return to the college for higher level spells, the academy is more than willing to add second- and third-level spells to the spell book as well (and incidentally copying and recording any lower-level spells the mage has gained in his travels). Spells beyond third level, and those not on the list, are available from the magicians present at the college, but are gained in the more traditional, time-honored manner (finding a wizard willing to teach the spell and convincing her to pass on the information).

This service is provided free to graduates of the Karameikan College of Magic, though participants are encouraged to provide what support they can to the academy, whether in service, instruction, new spells, magical items, or information and tomes. The academy will not refuse a graduate the lower-level spells noted here unless that graduate has posed a direct threat to the College, its instructors, or to the government of Karameikos.

Ω

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# Forum

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I am writing in response to Joe Katzman's letter in DRAGON issue #198, and in regard to bows versus crossbows. I do agree that bow specialization is inferior to melee-weapon specialization, but only slightly inferior.

A crossbow has a point-blank range of 6'-60', as opposed to the point-blank range of a bow, which is 6'-30'. The crossbow's range is extended not only because of the crossbow's greater power, but also because it is a much easier weapon to aim.

A damage adjustment for bow specialization would be unreasonable, but extra attacks, say three shots per round at 7th level and four per round at 13th, would be justified. I interpret a bow specialist's ability to "fire at the beginning of the round before any initiative rolls are made" an extra attack already granted.

Strength adjustment to bow damage can be significant when it's at range. Bambitheon, an elven bow specialist in my campaign, has an 18/94 strength. This high Strength score grants a +2 bonus on attack rolls and a +5 bonus to damage in addition to specialization bonuses. This means that sheaf arrows can do 6-13 damage per shot, and this is before an enemy can even close for melee. If a fighter is smart and locates an inaccessible place from which to shoot, this further increases his advantage.

A crossbow, though slower than and less damaging than a bow, has a greater range, and is easier to aim. I believe that the crossbow would be a much more widely

used weapon than the bow, so in my campaign, bow proficiency requires two slots. This not only makes reasonable the three-slot expense of specialization; it also reflects that in comparison with a weapon such as the crossbow, the bow is a more difficult weapon to employ.

Greg Howley  
Bristol CT

A serious problem has come to my attention recently and has forced me to write this letter.

I went to my local bookstore to buy the latest AD&D® game hardcover, when, to my dismay, I found the entire shelf missing. When I inquired as to the whereabouts of said bookshelf, I was politely told by one of the employees that their bookstore no longer carried AD&D game books and accessories.

The reason this bookstore, the largest bookstore I know of on Long Island, New York, was no longer carrying AD&D books and accessories (and other role-playing games) was because a large percentage of them were stolen. Not willing to disturb the atmosphere of the bookstore by placing security all over the place (which has seats scattered about the store so you can read books before you buy them), they removed their support entirely.

What could I say?

I agree with this bookstore's actions, because I have seen the results of these criminals before.

I once purchased a DRAGON Magazine and placed it in the front of my shopping cart while I was shopping in another store. I was away from my cart for only a moment. When I returned, I discovered the magazine had been stolen right out of the bag. My jacket, with wallet inside, was left unmolested.

My favorite library carried DRAGON Magazine for a short time. I use the word "short" because they promptly stopped carrying it. The reason, of course, was because there were no more left. They were all stolen.

As a matter of fact, I cannot find either DRAGON or DUNGEON® magazines in any

store near me. The owners withdraw their support of such magazines because they are constantly being stolen. (I get DRAGON Magazine through subscription now.)

I went to buy the latest rule book from another bookstore, and found *The Horde* boxed set open. There was only one item missing from the box—the MC pages. TSR uses these pages as a sales technique. After all, there is nothing I love more than a new monster to add to my collection. On the other hand, this product is generating a new breed of parasite who rips open boxes and steals the MC pages right out of them. It is bad enough when gamers tear open modules to see what new monsters and magical items are featured in it—it is far worse when boxed sets, such as the above, are rendered useless for a few sheets of paper.

A member of my gaming group approached me one day. "Hey, I just stole an *Oriental Adventures* book, a *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, and a *Wilderness Survival Guide*! Want one?"

I was furious. He was promptly ejected from my gaming group. If he had committed this act today, I would have forced him to bring the books back to the store where he stole them.

Real-life thieves such as these constitute the overzealous, the underpaid, and the just plain stupid. Their activities should be actively condemned. If someone offers you a stolen book, show your appreciation of their actions with a resounding "No!" and remind them that their actions are illegal. They take away from the enjoyment of other gamers, not to mention casting gamers in a bad light.

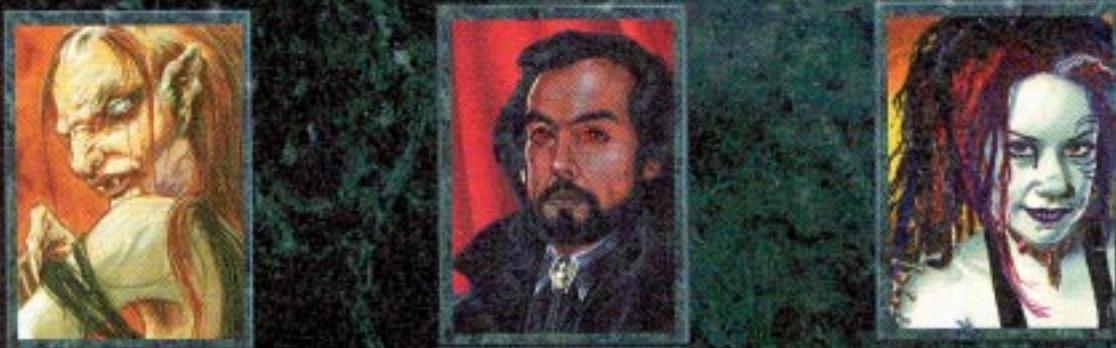
True gamers don't need to steal rule books, or anything else for that matter. Whatever motivation drives these criminals, the true gamer knows that no books are necessary, only your imagination.

No one has found a way to steal that from us yet!

Mike Tresca  
No address given

I write this in response to Bryan Fairfield's letter concerning his woes with

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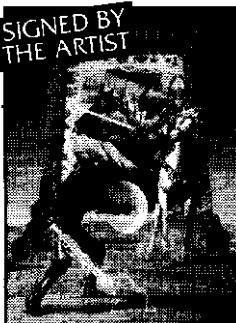




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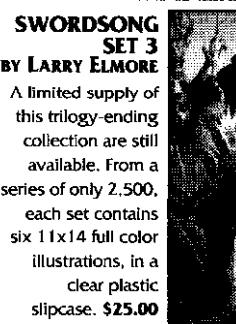
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multi-classed bards in issue #195. After looking over *The Complete Bard's Handbook* (I, too, own the entire PHBR series), I have come up with several solutions to Bryan's predicament.

I agree that *The Complete Bard's Handbook* is a wonderful, and potentially unbalancing, addition to the AD&D game. However, although I can't anticipate all the problems a DM might face if he decides to use this accessory in a campaign, I can see quite a few answers to Bryan's dilemmas.

The very first thought that comes to mind is "I thought multi-classed characters couldn't take kits." On closer examination, this preventative measure exists only with thieves (*PHBR2*, p. 45), but could easily be expanded to cover any multi-classed combination. (I can hear the screams of player protest already.)

A kinder DM may allow multi-classed characters to use kits (I know at least two who do), which would leave her back in the original quandary. The answer, in this case, is to start strictly enforcing various class restrictions, as the DM sees fit. The restriction that always makes the greatest impact is that on armor.

For example, the player playing the fighter/blade (whose ungodly numbers were generously listed by Bryan) might be told that unless he abides by the bards armor restrictions (up to chain mail only, and no shields), he will be unable to use any of his character's blade abilities. If the player is clever (most players are fairly sneaky) and takes the two-weapon specialization from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, seriously consider placing a stricter restriction on armor forms (up to studded leather, much like a ranger). If the player protests, gently chide him for playing out of character (in my campaigns, that usually translates into "Fewer Experience Points due to Bad Play"). A similar argument can be used with the fighter/gallant, who would rather don aesthetically pleasing gleaming chain mail before he would defensively intelligent plate mail. Remember that a real good-looking suit of chain mail probably costs about as much as the average suit of plate mail. Which do you think the gallant will get? Also, as equipment gets used, it tends to get dirty, and the cost of maintaining it will probably keep your average gallant from saving up enough to get better (and more expensive) protection, at least for a while.

Mr. Fairfield must be a very charitable DM if he allows thief/jongleurs or thief/gypsies. As he himself points out, allowing multi-classed rogues is like allowing a ranger/paladin as a multi-classed option. Not only is it an impossible combination, it seriously overpowers a character. I do not wish to criticize Bryan, of course, but perhaps in his enthusiasm for the *PHBR* series, he and his group have overlooked the core rules concerning multi-classed characters on page 44 of the *Player's Handbook*. Nowhere do I see a cleric/thief combination available for half-elves (or for any demihuman, for that matter). If this is

the case, where does the druid/meistersinger step in?

If all goes well, that should leave the party with two disgruntled fighter/bards (either with or without kits), two players who will have to make up new characters, and a psionicist.

If by this time Bryan has acquired the *PHBRs* concerning Elves, Gnomes & Halflings, or Humanoids, I'm certain a whole new barrel of monkeys has been opened: elven fighter/mage bladesingers, svirfneblin (need I say more?), minotaur fighter/clerics, etc. Dealing with most of these new races and kits has made me wish for the good old 1st Edition days when everyone first discovered *Unearthed Arcana* (barbarians and drow and cavalier-paladins, oh my!), but if worse comes to worst, try to remember that the DM always has the final say on whether an accessory or optional rule can be used in her campaign.

Ken Lacy  
Ithaca NY

This letter is in response to several parts of DRAGON issue #197.

I would like to add another computer option to Craig Schaefer's "By Mail or By Modem": "chat lines" on some e-mail networks. In college, I played in a MARVEL SUPER HEROES game "net" campaign; we logged on at a scheduled time, the DM rolled all the dice, and we fought each other for net time. It was great. At my college (and I believe many others), tuition and fees cover all computer and e-mail access, so it was cheaper than phone calls or letters. Contact your college's computer services office for information.

Kendall Miles and Erik Minne (in "Forum") had good suggestions for party backgrounds: let the players do it. I'll try that next time. The original PCs in the campaign which I ran in college worked well together, but we had the "you all meet in a bar" problem. We didn't have the time to coordinate anything special—we just wanted to get started!

I have some input (my two coppers) to add to the kits-for-multiclassed-characters debate. In the class handbooks, only priests and bards may be multi-classed and take kits. In my campaign, I only allow priests to do so. The cultural details a kit adds are almost as important to these spiritual leaders as the base class is. (Read divine favor into it too, if you wish.) Other multi-classed characters (and bards) are versatile and detailed enough as it is. I'll use the bard kits, but not multi-classed bards at all.

Of the race handbooks, I only have the Humanoids book. Therefore, I don't know how kits are handled in the others. But I wouldn't allow them to have multi-classed characters for the reasons given in the Fighter's book—they don't need them. For me, for now, the class books are enough, so I may never have to deal with the racial-kit issue.

*Bottom line:* The class and race hand-

books are completely optional. If you're the DM, use only what you feel comfortable with. Listen to your players, but don't be bullied by them. Emphasize the kits' hindrances, too.

Tim Emrick  
Milford MA

I would like to say that I thoroughly enjoyed the 1993 GEN CON® Game Fair although I didn't seem to get in quite enough gaming.

It's funny that every year I leave with a bittersweet tinge of sadness that the "coming together" of so many people with such unique interests must end after only four short days. I always feel that I should have bought that Easley watercolor or one more Brom print. There is never enough money or time.

As rejuvenating as it is for me to attend the great convention, I must say that this past year I saw an increase in something our games can do without: player rudeness and intolerance. I play only the AD&D game, so I will speak only for the games I attended.

It seems that more and more people are sitting down to the gaming table with a scathing tongue before the DM even gets a chance to "get cooking." Several times, I had players (often on both sides) who loudly voiced derogatory statements about the DM's style and rules observation.

My friends and I have played for years, and quite some time ago we decided that cutting down the game, the DM, and other players was pointless and combative, bringing a quick end to an otherwise enjoyable session and sometimes ruining chances of playing again!

I am judging at the 1994 convention, and I hope to deliver the most exciting AD&D module at the Game Fair! I realize that no one is perfect and there will be flaws in my game, but I certainly hope my players will give me the courtesy that I would show them. I can't believe that anyone would go to the expense and trouble to get to the GEN CON Game Fair and senselessly sour every game they enter.

Daniel L. Grindstaff  
Richmond VA

I'm writing to address four things that I think need changing. My first suggestion is a solution to the multi-class problem. Instead of splitting the experience evenly, give multi-class characters a major and one or two minor classes and split the experience 75%-25% or 50%-25%-25%. To show which class is which, state the major class first. A fighter/thief is 75% fighter, 25% thief, a thief/fighter the other way around. The DM might want to require at least a 16 in the prime requisite of the major class.

The constitution bonus is split 75%-25% and the hit points divided similarly. The THAC0 is that of the major class. The character receives new weapon and non-weapon proficiencies whenever the major class would get them. This is slower than a

single-classed one would receive them, helping to balance the multi-classed character's extra power. The choice of kits is from the major class or the appropriate multi-class kits with some adjustments.

Second, the parrying and disarming rules from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* need some adjustment. As they are now, it's easier to parry or disarm a 15th-level character in leather armor than a first-level one in plate mail. A more sensible way to calculate the armor class would be to only consider Dexterity and magical adjustments, plus 1/2 of a fighter's level, 1/3 of a priest's, thief's or psionicist's level, or 1/4 of a mage's (rounding up). For most monsters you would use 1/2 of their hit dice, subject to the DM's judgment.

I would also like to suggest some form of evil paladin for the AD&D game. The D&D® game has the avenger, so the idea is nothing new. As I understand it, paladins get their powers from the gods of good for being epitomes of truth, justice, and purity. So why can't evil gods do this for those who are epitomes of falsehood, dishonesty, and corruption?

The anti-paladin could be either a lawful evil nasty version of a paladin or a chaotic evil opposite of a paladin, whichever the DM wanted. Powers granted would be *protection from good, 10' radius, detect good, unholy swords, and control undead* as a priest three levels lower. *Cure disease* and *lay on hands* would be normal if LE

and opposite if CE. Everything else would be the same.

The fourth subject is ranger/paladin inequality. Paladins' powers are far better and more numerous than rangers'. Just compare a +2 bonus on all saving throws or *lay on hands* with *animal empathy*. To counter this, I have four power modifications to suggest for rangers.

First: limited weapon specialization. At first level, rangers may choose one tight weapon group from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* and specialize in these weapons only. This specialization is subject to the same restrictions as their fighting with both hands ability.

Second: if the ranger is specialized in the weapon in her off hand, instead of only one extra attack per round, the PC uses the warrior attacks per round table.

Third: instead of only one creature for their species enemy, the ranger chooses a related group such as giants, dragons, or goblins. In addition, they receive a +1 to damage every three levels (3, 6, 9, etc.). They also choose a specific species enemy, such as frost giants, red dragons or ogres, against whom they get a (non-cumulative) +1 to damage.

Fourth: they gain access to spells from the Elemental and Weather spheres as well as the Plant and Animal spheres.

Adam Panshin  
Riegelsville PA

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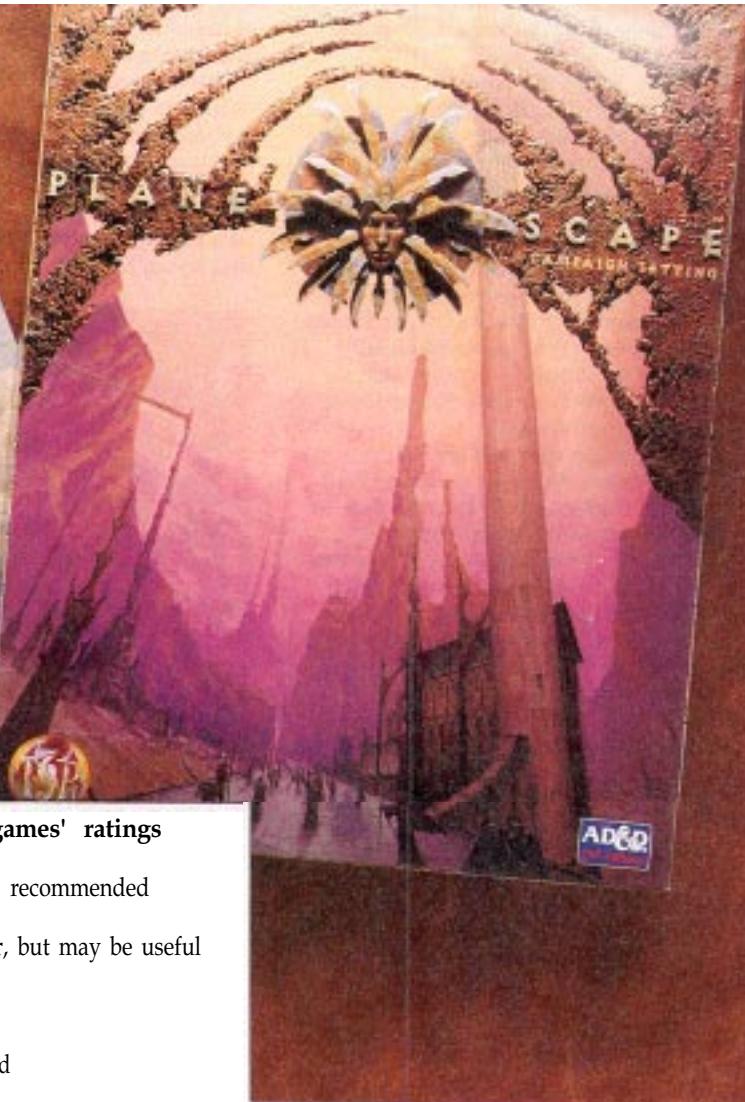
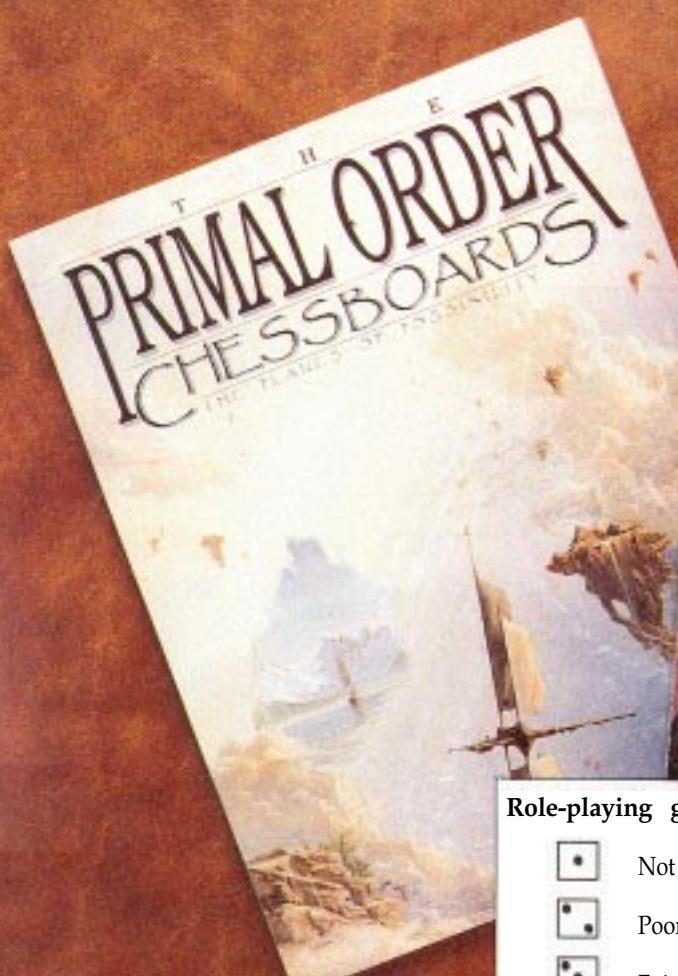
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# ROLE-PLAYING Reviews

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## Role-playing games' ratings

- Not recommended
- Poor, but may be useful
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- The best

# Extraplanar role-paying: Reality isn't what it used to be

Before we flutter off into the outer planes, I want to take a second and comment on a recent *Saturday Night Live* episode that, quite frankly, ticked me off. You might have seen it. In a game show sketch, host Emilio Estevez and the *SNL* crew competed for prizes by identifying the differences between dweebs and cool folks. Various dweebish activities were exhibited for the contestants to scorn. One of those activities was playing role-playing games such as the D&D® game.

Now far be it from me to insist on political correctness and I'm a fervent supporter of the First Amendment, but *SNL* went over the line. There it was, right on the TV screen, spelled out for the whole world to see: DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS. That's right—they left out the ampersand. It's the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, okay? That's just the kind of oversight you'd expect from a bunch of dweebs who write comedy.

Now, back to our regularly scheduled program.

## The PLANESCAPE™ setting

A campaign for the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game

One 96-page book, one 64-page book, two 32-page books, four 32" x 21" double-sided map sheets, one four-panel referee screen, boxed.

TSR, Inc. \$30

Design: David "Zeb" Cook

Editing: David Wise

Conceptual artist: Dana Knutson

Illustrations: Tony DiTerlizzi

Graphic design: Dee Barnett and Dawn Murin

Cover: Rob Ruppel



The *Manual of the Planes*, by TSR stalwart Jeff Grubb, stands among the best role-playing supplements of the 1980s and remains one of my all-time favorites. A design of staggering invention, the *Manual* explained extraplanar physics with a system of logical rules, and served up enough titillating adventure hooks to fill the Plane of Elemental Water. Color pools, proto-matter, and quasiplanar radiance awaited the intrepid adventurer. You could ride an ether cyclone in the Ethereal Plane, sic foo dogs on the Anu Soldiers of Nirvana, and vacation in the Nine Hells with the Lord of the Flies as your tour guide.

But the *Manual* never really caught fire. Maybe TSR couldn't stir up enough interest (only one supplement of consequence, OP1 *Tales of the Outer Planes* anthology, saw the light of day). Maybe the designers couldn't figure out what to do with it. Maybe baffled players gave up trying to

untangle all that stuff about magma pockets and psychic winds and decided to stick with dungeons. In any case, the *Manual of the Planes* slipped into the Abyss, to be cherished by a few die-hards and ignored by most everyone else.

Still, you can't keep a good multiverse down, and *Manual of the Planes* has returned, sort of, reincarnated as the PLANESCAPE setting, a spectacular boxed set and TSR's most ambitious campaign world to date. Abandoning the straightforward but dry approach of the *Manual*, the PLANESCAPE set reads less like a textbook and more like a story. Characters take precedence over game systems, high adventure supplants the physics lessons. It's designer Zeb Cook's finest effort since 1985's *Oriental Adventures* and may be his masterwork.

**Presentation:** The graphics and language are dramatically different from typical TSR fare. The five books boast color throughout, with generous space devoted to Tony DiTerlizzi's provocative illustrations. Streamers of what look like paraelemental toilet paper break paragraphs into jagged chunks. The quirky typeface, in which the "t" looks like a "+" sign, gives the text an unworldly feel. Oversized quotations sprinkled throughout the chapters ("Better to wrestle with a giant than to lock horns with a bariaur." "Gods protect us from the boredom that is Mechanus!") inform as well as entertain. Though the maps make better posters than play-aids—with its clusters of boxy buildings scattered across a barren plane, the map of Sigil looks like a lunar ant farm—they're attractive and well rendered. The referee's screen, however, seems superfluous, as many of its tables are lifted from the DMG and PH.

Thanks to Cook's informal prose, this goes down much easier than the *Manual of the Planes*. Here, for instance, is how the *Manual* describes movement in the Ethereal Plane:

*The traveler in the Ethereal consists of the same base material, and therefore has the same density, as his surroundings. A traveler can move forward, backward, up, or down by parting the vaporous medium at will.*

And here's how Cook handles it:

*Move off the edge of your plane, into the Deep Ethereal, and it's like an ocean. A body can swim for leagues without touching anything and then, all of a sudden like, there's an island floating in the mist.*

Cook seasons his writing with liberal doses of slang based on the lingo of thieves and swindlers from the 16th-18th centuries. Hence, we've got berks, bashers, and barmies (fools, thugs, and crazies) dealing in chants, garnishes, and dark (gossip, bribes, and secrets). While the slang gives the game a unique voice, it also can be awkward, even jarring. Take this excerpt from *A DM™ Guide to the Planes*, referring to adventures for advanced characters: "Mid-and high-level cutters won't have time to give it the yawn, either, if the DM is a blood." In this context, "cutter" means "player character" and "blood" means "expert." "Give it the yawn," I guess, is self-evident.

The slang reminded me not so much of an otherworldly language as the netrunning jargon common in cyberpunk RPGs. There's a comparable amount of cartoonish name-calling, a similar sense of weary cynicism. It can be fun, but it's also easy to overdo. Some of FASA's SHADOWRUN® game designers can't seem to go more than a few paragraphs without barfing up a *frag* or a *chummer*. I hope that the TSR crew shows more restraint, and we don't get berked to death in the source books.

**Mechanics:** And speaking of restraint, kudos to Cook for resisting the temptation to explain the physical laws of the planes in ponderous detail. Why do the planes assume such unusual shapes? Well, they just *do*. Why are some planes made of fire, some of ice? Well, they just *are*.

Cook insists that the mechanics serve the story, not vice versa, making this an extremely user-friendly multiverse. Take, for example, the rules governing interplanar travel. Characters can move from plane to plane via portals, elemental vortices, and astral conduits. How to use them? Just step in. A vortex works like a doorway, a conduit is nothing more than a tunnel. Note the refreshing absence of pseudo-science—no physics, no tables, no handfuls of clattering dice. Vortices and conduits eliminate dead spots in a campaign by whisking the PCs to the heart of the action—and that's all there is to it.

Equally refreshing are the rules for planar PCs. Depending on the parameters of the campaign, players may choose from the standard AD&D® game archetypes, including humans, dwarves, and halflings. Alternately, they may opt for planar races, such as bariaur (centaurlike creatures with the heads of humans and the bodies of sheep), githzerai (elongated humanoids with innate magic resistance), and tieflings (cryptically described as "part human and part something else"). With the DM's permission, all character classes are available.

Courageous DMs may even incorporate defilers and preservers from the DARK SUN® setting.

A player also may assign his PC to a character faction, defined as a set of benefits and restrictions similar to the character kits in the Complete Handbook series. While character kits derive from historical and literary archetypes, character factions derive from philosophies and alignments. Further, kits are specific to particular classes; most factions accept every class. The Athar faction, for instance, consists of atheistic cynics who dismiss the existence of gods; they benefit from spell immunity but are denied the use of healing magic. The egocentric Sign of One, who resist illusionary magic, believe that the multiverse exists because their minds imagine it; should they stop believing, the multiverse will disappear. The Dustmen, my favorite of the 16 factions, are convinced that we're all dead already, some of us are just more dead than others. Because each faction receives only a page of description, the details aren't always as clear as they could be. A rigid adherence to the legal system compels the Fraternity of Order to obey every law, but what happens if they don't? How do the nihilistic Dustmen function in the everyday world? How do they react when one of their brethren actually dies, or worse, cheats death by *resurrecting*? (Doesn't that violate their ethos?) Until the Complete Dustman's Handbook comes along, the DM will have to fill in the blanks.

Wizards and priest PCs need to brush up on their metaphysics before they attempt to cast spells. The caster's location limits her ability to use abjuration and summoning spells; *raise dead* doesn't work in the Inner Planes, *conjure elemental* won't function unless the caster's plane connects with an Elemental Plane. A *fireball* inflicts extra damage in the Elemental Plane of Fire and produces explosions of steam in the Paraelemental Plane of Ice. If a priest PC is on a plane other than the one where his deity resides, he functions at a lower experience level. Planar magic is complicated but not unwieldy; the referee screen summarizes the major changes.

**Geography:** With energetic, vividly imagined descriptions, Cook captures the magnitude of the multiverse and the diversity of its inhabitants. That's quite an accomplishment, considering that the multiverse encompasses all of TSR's campaign settings, past, present, and future.

The grand design of the multiverse consists of three divisions. The first division, the Prime Material Plane, includes the worlds associated with the DRAGONLANCE®, RAVENLOFT®, and the FORGOTTEN REALMS® settings. The six universes of the second division, the Inner Planes, correspond to the six elemental building blocks of the Prime Material Plane: Fire, Air, Earth, Water, Positive Energy, and Negative Energy. The Paraelemental Planes, subdivisions of the Inner Planes, appear where the Elemen-

tal Planes merge with one another. The Quasielemental Planes, yet another set of Inner Plane universes, arise along the borders of the Positive and Negative Planes. The third-division universes, the Outer Planes, take the form of broad rings, infinite in number and size. The three groups of Outer Planes are attuned to specific alignments: the Upper Planes of Good, the boundary Planes of Neutrality, and the Lower Planes of Evil.

With all those universes whizzing by, it's enough to make you feel like a mouse on the Los Angeles freeway. But Cook understands. To help overwhelmed players get their bearings, he provides a home base called Sigil, which serves as sort of a interplanar Grand Central Station. Centered in the Outlands, a stable area also known as Concordant Opposition, Sigil contains doorways leading to every locale in the multiverse. As described in the 96-page *Sigil and Beyond* book, it resembles a medieval city "built on the inside of a tire that hovers over the top of a god-know-how-tall spike, which rises from a universe shaped like a giant pancake." Visitors can arrange for sedan chairs to carry them from the Great Bazaar to the Festhall, while Light Boys brighten the way with *continual light* wands. Doomguards control the weapons of death, Mercykillers hunt down the bad guys, and Priestess Darkflame Montgomery, Sigil's most formidable politician, administers justice in the Hall of Speakers. Overseeing the realm is the Lady of Pain, a mysterious being inclined to flay the skins from those who offend her.

*Sigil and Beyond* also details a number of intriguing Outland landmarks. Ribcage, a town named for the curved mountains that enclose it like bony fingers, is noted for its fearsome militia and volcanic baths. The residents of Xaos—also known as Axos, Sxoax, or Oaxx, depending on the day of the week—live in utter chaos; without rhyme or reason, light gives way to darkness, water changes to fire, soup turns to lead. A few entries seem routine; the Dwarven Mountains and the shipbuilding community of Glorium could've been lifted from any fantasy campaign. But overall, it's a terrific collection.

For those wishing to venture outside of Sigil, the *DM Guide* contains a rundown of noteworthy universes from the Inner and Outer Planes. On the Plane of Earth, travelers may visit the Pale River, the Iron Crucible, and an immense network of caverns called the Great Dismal Delve, home of the khan of the dao. Hell hounds and efreeti abound in the Plane of Fire, where cinder rain pelts blazing oceans and the air itself can singe the skin. The Plane of Acheron consists of drifting cubes the size of small kingdoms. Carceri, the land of exiles, radiates dull red light and spawns plants that ooze acidic sap. Some of these planes are so hostile that they're all but useless for role-playing; visitors to the Quasielemental Plane of Mineral face petrification once per day, while those who linger on the Positive Energy Plane risk spontaneous combustion. Other planes are so skimpily described—

many are only a few paragraphs long—that they're best considered previews of coming attractions. I assume that future releases will address the Inner and Outer Planes in detail. Otherwise, I may ooze a little acidic sap myself.

**Denizens:** The Monstrous Supplement booklet presents an assortment of extraordinarily bizarre creatures. The Dabus, a creepy race of asexual intellectuals, communicate by conjuring strings of visible symbols that hover in the air. The horse-like nic'Epona, appearing in all colors of the rainbow, pass between the planes at will. This set also marks the reappearance of the modron, residents of the Plane of Mechanus who were apparently banished to Limbo after their introduction in 1983's *Monster Manual II*. Arguably the strangest creatures in the AD&D game's menagerie, modrons resemble spheres, cubes, and other geometric solids, arranged in a strict hierarchy. Each of the 14 ranks comprehends the existence of the ranks directly above and below it; for all practical purposes, the other ranks don't exist. An entire campaign could be structured around the modrons. For that matter, any of the PLANESCAPE entities could be used as an adventure springboard.

**Evaluation:** Of the setting's many innovations, the most compelling is tucked away on page 4 of the *Player's Guide*. Called "The Rule of Threes," it's a design philosophy that characterizes every element of the game as one third of a whole. Or, as Cook elegantly explains, "Good things come in threes . . . so do bad things." Traditional AD&D game campaigns can be considered as sets of opposites: good and evil, night and day, up and down. The PLANESCAPE setting adds the intermediary: good, evil, and neutrality; night, day, and twilight; up, down, and sideways. If that sounds vague . . . well, it is. As presented, "The Rule of Threes" is just a guideline, a general principle to be explored and developed in supplements to come.

Therein lies a potential problem. By covering so much ground and hinting at so many possibilities, the PLANESCAPE set raises expectations that may be tough to meet. Despite five books of material, there's only enough room to give a taste of what's in store, hence the tantalizing asides about dungeons made of giant skulls, a link between Toril and Krynn, and cities that change planes when their populations change alignments. This set is a box of promises, and if subsequent supplements fail to deliver, there's going to be an awful lot of disappointed berks.

Will the PLANESCAPE line succeed? I think so, if the designers steer clear of clichés and avoid rehashing fantasy settings. I'm not much interested in the Dwarven Mountains; I can probably find something similar in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. But I'm dying to get a look at the modron colonies.

## Chessboards: Planes of Possibility\*

114-page softcover book



Wizards of the Coast	\$13
<i>Design:</i> Dave Howell	
<i>Editing:</i> Beverly Marshall Saling	
<i>Development:</i> James E. Hays, Jr.	
<i>Illustrations:</i> Anson Maddocks, Quentin Hoover, Ron Spencer, Yan Rozentsveig, and Sandu Florea	
<i>Cover:</i> Rob Alexander	

This is a mess, but it's a glorious mess. Intended as a universal sourcebook, *Chessboards: Planes of Power* explains how multiverses can be put to use in any role-playing system. It's not, however a sourcebook in a conventional sense. This a book of theory, a collection of essays dealing with all things extraplanar, spewed from the agile imagination of designer Dave Howell. As Howell cheerfully admits in the afterword, most of *Chessboards* is superfluous. "These rules—no, let's call them guidelines—provide a structure and system for adding more gaming real-estate than anyone could ever use." But it's also playful, eclectic, and sly, a joy to read from start to finish. This may be the first supplement in role-playing history that cites William Shakespeare, Willy Wonka, and *I Dream of Jeannie* as inspiration.

*Chessboards* doesn't look like much. Graphically, it's a bore, especially compared to the eyecatching PLANESCAPE setting. The illustrations, though well done, have little to do with the text; they could've been reshuffled and placed anywhere without making much difference. Howell's pedestrian sketch maps should've been redrawn by an artist. There's nearly enough blank space to write another book. As for the organization, let's be generous and call it eccentric. Howell hops from topic to topic seemingly at random, often within the same chapter. Definitions of key concepts are buried in the text; I would've gladly traded the three pages of ads for a good index.

But the quality of the writing more than compensates for any deficiencies in the presentation. With his effortless mix of formality and whimsy, Howell writes like a dream. He illuminates complicated ideas with striking imagery (a Dyson sphere is "a shell built around a star") and lightens difficult passages with cornball puns (an imaginary tome is called *Sites and Sights to See on the Sea*). Consider the evocative use of language in this discussion of the planar knot, a phenomenon that spawns artifacts of godly significance:

*Of the knot, not much was known. Of the consequences, all was too clear. As the final twist was wrought, by those who knew no better, the flaw was fractured, and the plane was slain. Those who knew no better were pleased, for they, correctly, felt they had accomplished their goal. Of the power, quantities were copious. Of the danger, none there knew.*

That may not be poetry, but it's close. *Chessboards* shimmers with similar passages. It's an impressive performance, one that catapults Howell to the first rank of

game designers.

The book opens with descriptions of the five primary planar groups. Group one, the Worlds of the Aethereal Sea, consists of self-contained planes bobbing in a soupy abyss; because the planes have no edges, a person who walks far enough will end up wherever he started. The second group, the Fuervir Continuum, resembles a strip of postage stamps, each stamp separated from its neighbors by walls of mist. The planes of group three, the Lands of Ledua, look like hexagons. The Kaqxchle Chips, group four, are airborne ecosystems drifting towards a barrier of liquid light. The final group, the Realms of the Tatagan, comprises seven independent planes that personify anger, magic, and chaos in various combinations.

After showcasing the planar groups, Howell sweeps us away on a tidal wave of cosmic gobbledegook. A discussion of planar constants reveals the effect of permissive and imperative absolutes on the formation of a universe. We're introduced to sentient planes—those with aesthetic sensibilities and minds of their own—and are told how to make maps based on metaphysical relationships instead of physical terrain. Elsewhere, we're treated to the steady-state concept of planar growth, the pros and cons of multi-verse warps, and excerpts from the Continuum Edition of *Edgar's Boring Travel Book*. For the adventurous, there's a section on designing planes from scratch. First, though, you'll have to work through the Grand Unified Principle of Primal Energy. Don't forget your flux variables!

Howell also answers a load of questions that it would never have occurred to me to ask. Can a referee prevent characters from moving halfway through a gate, then backing up? Yes. Just position the gate flush against a solid wall. What happens when two planes collide? They stick together; one might glue itself to the bottom of the other. How come maps of fantasy lands are usually overlaid with hexes or grids instead of latitude and longitude lines? Simple, says Howell—most imaginary lands are flat.

**Evaluation:** If the PLANESCAPE setting is more than you can handle, forget about *Chessboards*. I defy anyone without a degree in computer science to make sense of the Appendix of Planar Growth Formula, a five-page spreadsheet analysis that defines *conduit load* as the "amount needed to sustain planar reality (D2), plus the amount needed to restock planar base reserves (E2), minus the amount of flux generated by the base already in the reserves (F2), and minus the flux arriving from divine feedback." But even at their most obscure, Howell's musings are never less than fascinating. *Chessboards* stands as a work of remarkable intelligence and irresistible mischief. If you can resist a book with a section titled "Planes as Morons," maybe you're taking this stuff too seriously.

## Short and sweet

*Van Richten's Guide to the Created* by Tewwynn Woodruff, TSR, Inc., \$13.  
*Adam's Wrath* by Lisa Smedman.

TSR, Inc., \$10.

The AD&D game meets Frankenstein in these first-rate supplements for the RAYVENLOFT® setting. *Van Richten's Guide to the Created* discusses the manufacture of golems in lurid detail, touching on material procurement, mental development, and brain transplants. What makes this the most memorable entry in the *Van Richten's* line is Woodruff's gleeful commentary about the, er, visceral consequences. A section on "Body Parts and Decay" tells how long it takes a corpse to rot under various climatic conditions; a brain kept indoors should stay fresh for a couple of days, providing you run the dehumidifier. The "Nutritional Requirement" rules advise that a thoughtful master should feed his golem a suckling pig at least once a week.

Consider *Guide to the Created* a warm-up for the *Adam's Wrath* adventure, which pits mid-level PCs against the demented Doctor Victor Mordenheim and his nightmarish minions. Highlights include a visit to a haunted mansion, a showdown with living snow, and a nail-biting climax on the Isle of Agony. The most unforgettable moment comes early, when the party regains consciousness in Mordenheim's lightning tower. I don't want to give it away, but suffice to say that when you awaken, "Something is wrapped around your head, covering your eyes . . ."

*Pantheons of the Megaverse* by C. J. Carella, Palladium Books, \$20.

Asgardian dwarves with pistols? That'll give you an idea of the off-beat delights awaiting in this compendium of deities that Palladium calls "untraditional." No kidding. Carella mixes historical legends with B-movies, comic books, and the kind of bad dreams you get after eating onions and ice cream to come up with the weirdest mythology this side of H.P. Lovecraft. Cihuacoatl, the Aztec earth goddess, looks like a two-headed giant who wears a loincloth of writhing serpents. The shapeshifting Ariman, armed with a batwinged sword, rides a robotic vehicle made of living armor. Nasu the Corpse, the Persian god of the dead, generates gusts of disease-laden wind and inflicts blisters with the touch of his hand. Though intended for the Rifts® game and other Palladium products, *Pantheons* is light on rules and heavy on ideas, making it a good resource for just about any RPG. Power-mad gamers might want to check out the section on "Gods as Player Characters."

*GURPS Operation Endgame* by Thomas Kane, Steve Jackson Games, \$17.

It breaks my heart to go into a game store and see all those old TOP SECRET/S.I.™ supplements languishing in the discount bins. Doesn't anyone want to grow up to be James Bond anymore? If Thomas Kane can't revive interest in secret-agent games, it probably can't be done. First came his *GURPS Espionage* supplement, a superb treatment of international intrigue for the GURPS® game. Now comes *Operation Endgame*, a set of four linked adventures with

heart-thumping plots worthy of Ian Fleming. The first scenario opens in Denmark, with the PC agents hot on the trail of a KGB defector. Subsequent encounters take them to Moscow, Madagascar, and Beijing, leading to a final confrontation in a Kazakhstan wilderness camp. Set against the breakup of the U.S.S.R., the adventures feature enough realistic detail to make them convincing, and enough Hollywood gimmickry to keep them fun.

*Terra* by Brian Sean Perry with Ed Stark. West End Games, \$18.

"Charming" isn't a word I usually associate with the TORG\* game. But the *Terra* sourcebook, based on the pulp novels of the 1920s and '30s, has charm to spare. The world of Terra has its roots in ancient Egypt, when the evil pharaoh Sutenhoptep was denied rulership because of his illegitimate birth. Flash forward to the late 19th century, where a cult on an uncharted Pacific island engages in arcane rituals to bring Sutenhoptep back to life. Renaming himself Dr. Mobi-us, the resurrected pharaoh embarks on a life of crime to rebuild his empire. Thus begins the age of weird science, replete with Rocket Rangers, electro-rays, and gaudy villains like the Silk Panther. It's not as trite as it sounds—even with a narrator named Typewriter Joe—thanks to designer Brian Perry's light touch and affection for the genre. Nice cover, too.

*More Guns* by Greg Porter. Blacksburg Tactical Research Center, \$20.

Initially, I filed this away without giving it much attention. Then I found myself referring to it so often that I finally stuck it on the shelf with TSR's *Arms and Equipment Guide*, Steve Jackson's *GURPS vehicles*, and my other dog-eared reference books. A sequel of sorts to *Guns, Guns, Guns*, also written by Porter, explains how to design realistic firearms for role-playing games and describes hundreds of examples in loving detail. Though the descriptions are interesting, the heart of the book is the conversion section, 150-plus pages of notes and tables. Complete statistics—including weight, cost, and damage values—are provided for more than 500 weapons for GURPS, TORG, the CYBERPUNK: 2020\* game, and five other RPGs. The logical presentation and easy-to-use format make this a must for the trigger-happy. (Information: Blacksburg Tactical Research Center, 1925 Airy Circle, Richmond VA 23233.)

*STAR RIDERS\** game by Hans Guevin. Janus Games, \$15.

A follow-up to R. Talsorian's hilarious TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE\* game, the *STAR RIDERS* game casts the players as knuckleheaded space travelers struggling to find their way home. Character classes include Thrillseekers, Hypocrites, and Failed Students of the Farce, drawn from races

such as the Very Near Human and the Real Weirdies. To resolve actions, players compare die-rolls to the appropriate Knacks (Clobbering, Flying Saucer Piloting, Play Air Guitar) and Weird Alien Powers (Breathe Fire, Teleport, Temporal Funk). Star Riders never die, they just get bonked and sit out for a while, sort of like what happens to Steve Jackson Games' TOON\* game PCs when they fall down. The rules are clearly explained, reasonably thorough, and largely irrelevant; in a humor game, it's the laughs that count, not the mechanics. So is the *STAR RIDERS* game funny? You decide. For openers, you've got a smelly planet called Dorm I populated by frat boys, and sentient toasters that die when their warranties expire. Want more? How about a bark-covered femme fatale called Marla Maple-tree? (Information: Janus Games, 5000 Iberville, Suite 332, Montreal, PQ., Canada H2H 2M2.)

*Rick Swan has designed and edited more than 40 role-playing products. You can write to him at 2620 30th St., Des Moines IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) if you'd like a response.*

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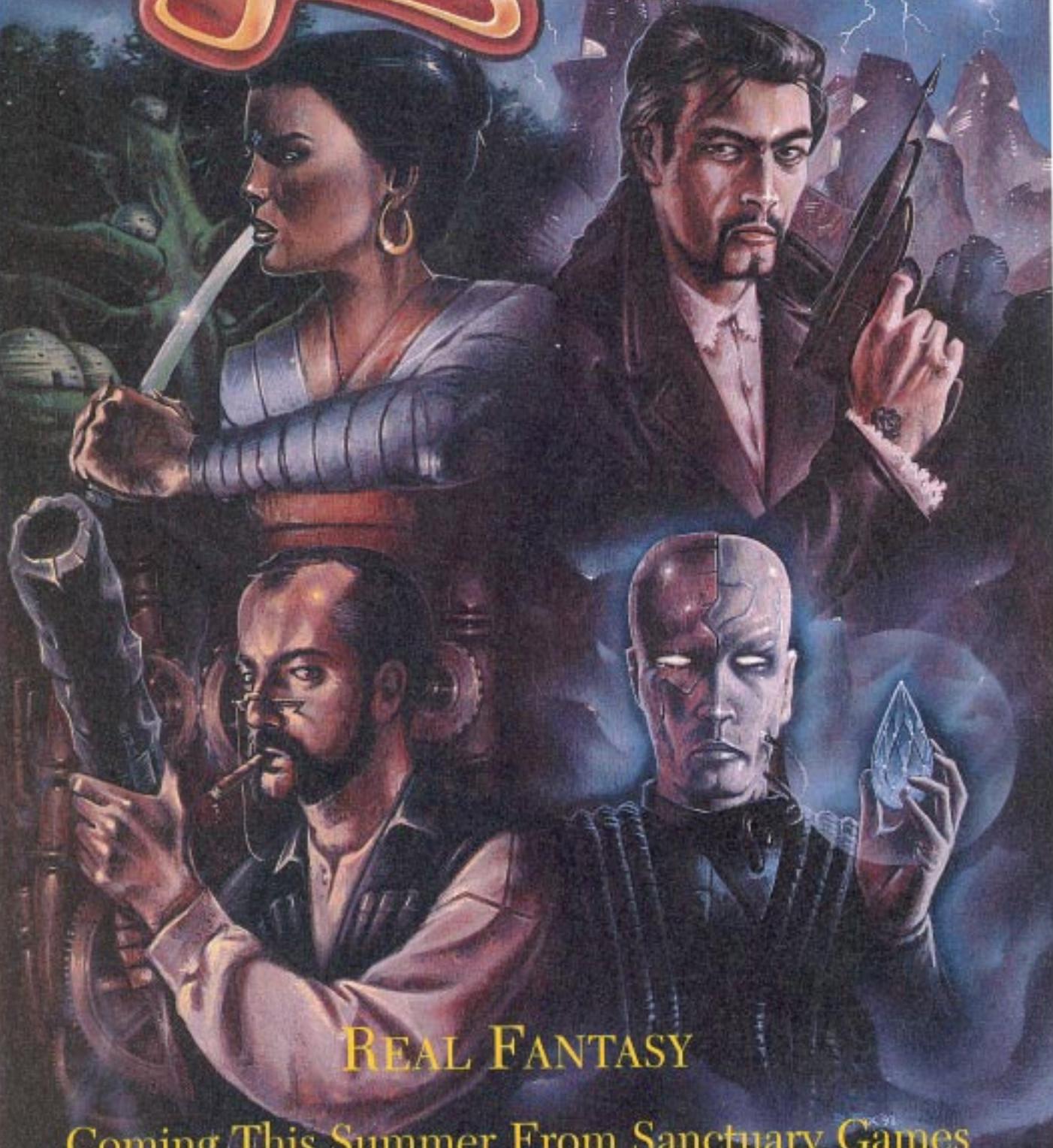
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# Tales of Gargentuir



REAL FANTASY

Coming This Summer From Sanctuary Games

# The Game Wizards

by James M. Ward

## The SPELLFIRE™ card game

*The city of Waterdeep is attacked by Lolth, the drow goddess. Because of favors given in the past, Elminster the wizard lends a hand in the city's defense. Standing before the city gates, he dares do what no other would and orders the Spider-Queen back into the depths of her underground realm.*

*Screaming her rage at such effrontery, Lolth summons thri-kreen to aid her vile cause, but before they arrive Elminster brings the Treants of Grandwood to hold the line.*

*Lolth, in a succession of crushing attacks, summons the armies of Bloodstone, the Iron Legion, a legion of pteranodons, and, even against their will, the noble djinn. These allies appear to have won the day. Waterdeep is destroyed and lies in ruin, but Elminster, still smiling, summons up his greatest magic and brings forth the Spirit of the Land to restore Waterdeep to its original splendor, and banishes Lolth—for a time.*

The scene above is just one possible outcome when you play TSR's new SPELLFIRE card game. A single \$8.95 pack has two sets of 55 cards each. This allows two people to play the game instantly. As the players collect more cards, they can make their decks more powerful by replacing old cards from the mix of 425 different cards.

There are 400 cards in the main set. The cards feature artwork by Jeff Easley, Clyde Caldwell, Brom, Fred Fields, Rob Ruppel, and Tom Baxa. Another special set of 25 cards can be found, one to a pack, in the game's \$2.50 15-card booster packs.

DARK SUN®, FORGOTTEN REALMS®, GREYHAWK®, and other AD&D® game characters, monsters, magical items, and spells are used in the game because we thought it would be fun for characters from the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting like Elminster to fight mind flayers or wizards from the GREYHAWK campaign world.

Each card is numbered: 1 of 400, 99 of 400, etc., or in the case of the special set: 1 of 25, 2 of 25, and so on. There will be 100

rare cards, 100 uncommon cards, 50 realm cards, and 150 common cards. The 25 cards made for the booster packs will be common cards. In a pack of 110 cards, there will be 10 rare, 20 uncommon, and the 80 common cards. In the booster pack available in July there will be two rare, four uncommon, eight common, and one of the 25 special cards. The ratio in later booster releases changes to nine common, four uncommon, and two rare cards.

### The game

The purpose of the game is to build six realms. A realm is exactly like a country or large city in the DARK SUN, FORGOTTEN REALMS, or GREYHAWK worlds. These realm cards show pieces of TSR game-world maps. The first player to build six realms wins. The realm cards often have special powers to aid in their defense.

Imagine not being able to use spells on a realm like Tantras because of its unusual anti-magical nature. Discover that the harsh realms of Athas are able to defend themselves without champions (more about champions below) because the inhabitants of the city are so strong. Along with realm cards, there are holding cards. These are much like fortifications or powerful villages. These holdings are attached to realms and their special powers aid in the realm's defense. Every pack of 110 has 10-15 realm cards.

Champions from your hand of eight cards either protect your realms or attack other players' realms. These champions can be used to attack or defend on later turns. A champion can be a famous monster, wizard, cleric, or warrior from TSR's novels and game products. You will see Dragon King cards, wizard cards for



Photography by Charles Kohl

Elminster and Mordenkainen, hero cards of Neeva and Rikus and more of the most popular figures in TSR's worlds.

Ally cards are bands of beings, both human and creatures, who fight alongside your champion, but are discarded after every battle.

Magical items, artifacts, and spell cards add to the power of your heroes. All your favorite AD&D spells, magical items, and artifacts can be used to help you win.

Exciting event cards change the look of the realms and the powers of the champions defending those realms. Event cards are sweeping magical effects that move mountains, end titanic battles, and change the lives of even the most powerful heroes, monsters, and wizards.

Two players can start playing with the first 110-card pack they buy, but enthusiasts will want more cards to build the strongest decks. Others will want decks that are composed solely of FORGOTTEN REALMS cards or DARK SUN cards. The game is even more fun with more players.

The rules come in a 16-page booklet. Most of the book is examples and diagrams. We've tried very hard to design simple, easily understood rules. There aren't a lot of exceptions to the rules and there are several easy-to-follow action tracks to play the game.

The quarterly releases of booster packs will have at least 100 new cards each. The RAVENLOFT® set debuts in August and the DRAGONLANCE® set comes out in November. The booster cards aren't planned to be placed in the main packs of 110. Special contests at the GEN CON® Game Fair and other conventions will allow you to test

your decks and determine which TSR world is filled with the best heroes or toughest monsters.

## The cards

To make sure that the game was playable with every deck of 55 cards, the designers had to make sure there were at least ten realm cards in each deck. A separate sheet of realm cards had to be printed and sorted into each pack. That's why there is a separate selection of these cards presented in the checklist. There are 13 other realm cards spread throughout the other common, uncommon, and rare cards.

And now for the numbers you have all been waiting for:

There were 26,750,400 common cards printed.

There were 11,168,000 uncommon cards printed.

There were 5,344,000 rare cards printed.

There were 1,425,600 special booster cards printed.

There were 5,504,000 of the special realm cards printed.

A grand total of 50,192,000 SPELLFIRE cards were created.

## Tournament play

Many people have already made requests for a set of official TSR tournament rules for playing the SPELLFIRE game. While there are hundreds of ways to set up such a tournament, here's one quick and easy way to play when considering large numbers of players.

Begin with pairs of players, and the winners go on to round two.

In round two, play four-player games with the winners of the round going to round three.

Round three is a timed match. The player who wins in the shortest amount of time takes first place with other places being taken by other winners as they win at their tables.

Plan on a two-player match taking anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes. A four-player game can take anywhere from 35 to 50 minutes.

In tournament play there can be only two types of games. Game type one is played with decks straight out of the packages, although one booster package can be used to exchange cards with the original 55 cards. These exchanges are only made between games and by the winners of past games. Referees should note the cards that come from each booster pack so that there is no chance of error on exchanged cards. Game type two allows players to choose their decks from all the cards they have. These decks will be very powerful and are not suited for playing people who are using new decks.

It is vital that there be one referee for every ten players. These referees should have absolute authority over rules or card interpretations. Remember that a deck can never have more than 55 cards. Use all the rules of the SPELLFIRE game.

## The checklist

There are always requests from collectors about which cards are common, uncommon, and rare. Here is a checklist so that as you purchase cards you can determine how close you are to completing a set.

### Common cards

45	51	53	54	56	57	59	60	65	74
78	79	81	87	89	91	92	98	101	102
104	105	108	134	137	138	139	140	141	147
146	148	149	151	152	155	161	181	184	188
193	196	198	199	201	203	206	209	211	216
231	232	235	236	237	241	242	243	244	245
246	247	248	250	251	253	254	256	260	264
265	268	270	271	272	274	276	278	279	282
283	290	294	296	303	306	307	309	310	312
313	315	316	318	319	321	328	329	331	332
333	334	335	336	337	338	340	341	342	343
346	347	349	350	351	353	356	357	358	359
360	361	363	365	368	370	371	372	373	374
375	376	380	382	383	384	385	386	387	388
389	390	391	392	394	395	396	397	398	400

### Uncommon cards

13	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	44	47	50	52	55	58	63	64
71	75	77	82	86	90	93	96	99	100
103	106	109	112	116	124	125	135	150	153
156	157	158	160	163	167	170	171	176	177
183	187	190	194	195	200	202	205	210	217
220	225	226	228	229	230	233	234	240	249
252	255	257	258	261	266	269	273	275	277
280	285	287	291	293	297	300	302	308	311
314	317	320	324	330	364	367	369	378	379

### Rare cards

3	28	42	43	46	48	49	61	62	66
67	68	69	70	72	73	76	80	83	84
85	88	94	95	97	107	110	111	123	142
143	144	145	154	159	162	164	165	166	168
169	172	173	174	175	178	179	180	182	185
186	189	191	192	197	204	207	208	212	213
214	215	218	219	238	239	259	262	263	267
281	284	286	288	289	292	295	298	299	301
304	305	322	323	325	326	327	339	344	345
348	352	354	355	362	366	377	381	393	399

### Realm cards

1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	29	30	113	114	115
117	118	119	120	121	122	126	127	128	129
130	131	132	133	136	221	222	223	224	227

### Special booster cards (only in a set of 25)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25					

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# Violence and games: Cause or effect?

Recently, I attended the 8th Annual Computer Game Developers' Conference. Here, over a thousand computer-game developers, designers, programmers, artists, producers, and less classifiable types all mingled in a fair approximation of camaraderie. Many informative seminars and roundtables were held, not to mention uninformative, but still fun, activities. One of the most interesting events I attended was a roundtable on the subject of violence in computer and cartridge games.

Feeling a bit controversial, I wore my DOOM T-shirt to the roundtable. (I had a fair amount to do with the design of the DOOM game, which is an especially violent game.) The roundtable's moderator was John Wilson, the editor of *Computer Gaming World* and probably the most highly respected media personality in the rather restricted field of electronic-game critics (by which I mean the games are electronic, not the critics!). At the start of the round-table, Mr. Wilson remarked that he didn't want the session to turn into a DOOM-bashing exercise. To some extent, he failed in this goal, because there were heaps of DOOM-bashing going on. It was very interesting to watch and listen both to what people said in attacks on violence, as well as what was said in defense of violent games.

Mr. Wilson told a touching story about a foster child he cared for some years ago. This boy was a borderline schizophrenic and so, as one can imagine, was very difficult to tend. The boy wanted a Nintendo game system with all the fervor of preadolescent youth. For a long time, Mr. Wilson would not provide him with the system, pointing out that he had a selection of computers packed with excellent educational software and appropriate games. But the boy wanted the Nintendo more than ever, not only for its own sake, but also because it was a "peer" thing. Everyone else had one. He needed one too.

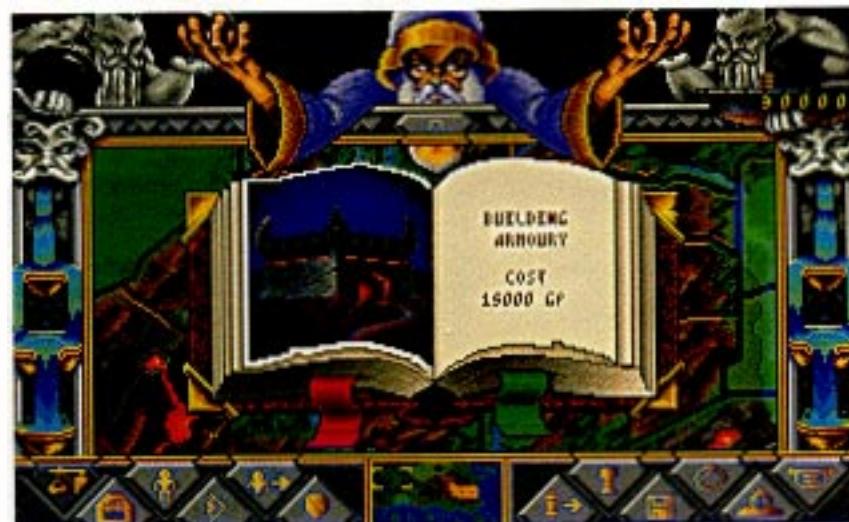
Finally, Mr. Wilson bought one for his foster son, not primarily because of the boy's begging, but because Mr. Wilson saw it as another technique to use in disciplining the child. As he pointed out, most foster children have been hit aplenty by their real parents. Striking a foster child is an inappropriate, and worse, counterproductive, method of disciplining him. Yet even borderline schizophrenic children need to be corrected from time to time. So

## Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb



©1994 by Sandy Petersen



*Fantasy Empires (SSI)*

Mr. Wilson planned to use the withholding of Nintendo privileges as a tool to get the boy to behave.

Now, this child behaved fairly badly in school and on the playground (at least, this is the impression I got from Mr. Wilson's speech). He struck his playmates, maybe even his teachers. Mr. Wilson certainly didn't intend that the new Nintendo system stimulate the child to even more violence, so he personally taught his foster son the games, and played alongside him, picking out the games as carefully as possible. The child's violence decreased. At one point, the child caused a ruckus at school, and he was punished by having the Nintendo taken away for two days. During those two days, the child's violence increased again. The message? While no generalities can be proven by the use of a single example, certainly it is clear that

computer games do not universally enhance the violence within every person. At least in some cases, they may serve as a useful catharsis.

In the same session, one woman pointed out that the U.S.A. was a very violent and dangerous place, compared with much of the world. She stated that it was clear that the American media (including movies, TV, novels, computer and video games, and presumably tabletop RPGs as well), which emphasizes violence as a problem-solving technique, was responsible for much of the murders and problems that the U.S.A. suffers. Another woman, named Laurel, who has been living in Canada for some time, replied that she, too, once believed that it was the American media that was primarily responsible for American cultural aggression. But Laurel then added, "Every American TV show is available in



Fantasy Empires (SSI)

Every American movie is available there, too. Yet despite all this "pro-violence propaganda," the murder rate in Canada remains remarkably low. Laurel went on to say that we should not ignore "this vast, controlled experiment in media-controlled violence just north of us." Her conclusion? The American media is the result, not the cause of American violence.

A Commonwealth visitor stated that another cause of American violence was the prevalence of guns. He was jumped on (verbally only, despite our violent American nature), and set straight—though guns

might make our native violence more deadly, once more they were the result of our aggression, not the cause.

Around this point, Laurel was confronted by another woman, who asked her, "Would you want your daughter out on the playground with boys who have been playing *Mortal Kombat* all afternoon?" Laurel gave the obvious reply, "She is!"

A very earnest fellow gave a lengthy diatribe against a rating system of any kind. I'll summarize his arguments below. I strongly disagreed with this person, and so I will unfairly (to him) present a point-by-point counter-argument to his claims.

First, he stated that any kind of rating was a form of censorship, and that censorship in any form was wrong.

*My reply:* I don't concur that "any kind of rating" is necessarily synonymous with censorship. I think that certain subjects should be restricted to a more mature audience. I don't advocate banning such subjects, just restricting access to them.

Second, he indicated unequivocally that parents must not abdicate the role of deciding what their children should watch or play to a ratings panel. He pointed out that a game might receive a "bad" rating for a number of different reasons (nudity, violence, language, so-called "adult themes," etc.), and that a parent should know exactly what the "bad" thing in a particular game was, so that we could make an educated response.

*My reply:* Speaking as a parent (of five!), I don't want to "abdicate" my role to a ratings panel. However, I don't mind having its assistance. I have plenty to do without checking out every single game in the world to ensure that it is suitable for my kids. (Well, actually, as a game reviewer, I suppose I could easily check out a desired game, but not all parents are in my position.) I'm happy to let a ratings panel do some of my work for me. This doesn't absolve me of all responsibility, of course, it just makes my task easier, since I don't have to sift through every movie or game to figure out which are best for my kids, just the ones with a reasonable rating.

Third, he stated that a rating system wouldn't work—it would just add a certain cachet to the games with the more ominous ratings, in the same way that a PG-13 or an R movie rating is "necessary" for a movie's marketplace success.

*My reply:* A rating system for games is inherently different from the one for movies. With movies, the person seeing the film is normally also the person paying for the tickets. With games, the person buying the game is very often not the same person who is going to play it—because most games are purchased by parents for a child. Hence, the parent is practically certain to see the rating of a game, and know whether he wants his child to play that game. In addition, if the child does buy the game on his own, the parent is likely to see the game box hanging around, and discover the rating.

## Reviews

### FANTASY EMPIRES

IBM and compatibles

\*\*\*

SSI

Programmers: Dennis Dyack, Rick Goertz

Lead artist: Scott Collie

Producers: Chuck Kroegel, Nicholas Beilaeff

This game requires four MB of RAM(!), and a fairly fast 386 or a 486 to run. A mouse is needed.

*Fantasy Empires* is a bit schizoid. It

purports to be like the D&D® game, but violates the D&D game rules all over the place. It is basically a strategic conquest war game, like *Masters of Orion*, *Civilization*, *Empire*, or any number of other similar games, yet despite this, it boasts a Dungeon Master(!).

You are expected to conquer the land of the MYSTARATM campaign setting, which consists of 98 different territories, ranging from blackened volcanic turf to distant islets. You create a character (initially only first level), and receive a fief somewhere, with 30,000 gold pieces. Lurking elsewhere in the countryside are the loathsome enemies, whom you must stomp as best you can. Atop the screen is the DM, who watches every move you make (unless you turn him off). He's kind of cute. I found myself turning him on occasionally, just to hear him speak. Unfortunately, he tends to give you the same advice over and over again, but it's amusing to come back from a trip to the bathroom or kitchen and see that he has fallen asleep and is snoozing away, or to have him get all huffy at you when you break treaties with other nations. The whole concept of a DM overseeing a strategy game is just a cheap trick, really, but what the heck, cheap tricks can be fun!

The only real drawback to the DM is that when his animations are working, all your actions are slowed down. For instance, building a keep when the DM is fully active consists of him pulling a book out of nowhere, turning the pages of the book by hand to the page you want, then, when you've chosen the keep, he closes the book and returns it. He then causes miniature keeps to materialize in each hand, and when you select the land to hold the keep, he hurls it down to the land, and materializes a new one. All these animations take time, and after you've seen them a few times, you'll probably turn them off, like I did. Still, I'm glad they're there, because they're kind of neat the first few times.

The worst part of this game is the information-gathering process. To play, you must train troops, march them around the countryside, manage battles, and harass the foe with magic. You have to micro-manage almost every single area you control every turn. Unfortunately, it is difficult to maneuver around the map, and you have no good way to see what is going on. There is a tiny map at the bottom of the screen, which is almost useless, and there is a great big map in the middle of the screen, which is handy at times. However, it would have been extremely useful to have an intermediate map to pop up, just like *Walls of Rome* possesses. Also irksome is the fact that you have no simple way to maneuver around this map. You must either scroll very slowly on the "big" map, or scoot with way too much speed around the little map (which also won't let you go right up to the map edge, where a number of provinces lie).

At the game's start, you control only a single province, as do each of your rivals. The enormous majority of the provinces are neutral, and ripe for the taking. Each province provides you with a certain amount of gold pieces each turn, usually somewhere between 1,200 and 2,800 gp. To ensure the conquest of a neutral province, you have to send in a little over 100 soldiers. More than half of them will die in the process, presumably falling prey to indigenous forces. To conquer an enemy province, you simply need to defeat whatever forces are there.

You are able to build an array of structures in a province, such as castles, wizards towers, and keeps. The most essential is the keep, which costs 7,500 gp (three to six times a province's income). Without a keep, any garrison stationed in a province continues to lose 50 or more troops every turn! So don't conquer somewhere you can't afford to maintain. Strangely, if you do have a keep, you don't need to keep any troops at all in the province—everyone just stays in line just by the keep's looming presence, I guess.

If you build an armory in a province, you can train troops there, ranging from ordinary soldiers to battering ram and ballista crews, depending on the province. Most provinces only have humans, but there also are orcs, shadow elves, elves, halflings, and dwarfs available in the mix. It takes between one and four turns to complete a single "unit" of these troops, and the cost ranges from 500 to 2,000 gp each. I tried to keep my armories full of training troops at all times. At first, you won't want to create the battering rams and other siege-type engines. Later on, you'll need them.

One touch I liked was the fact that you can train up specialized adventurers to assist your troops or go on quests. By constructing the appropriate building and paying the ever-present fee you can build up elves, dwarfs, fighters, wizards, clerics, or druids. The hardest to get and most expensive are the magic-using classes, but these also are the most useful in a strategic sense.

You can send your adventurer-types on quests, where they can obtain magical items and advance in level. You have a choice of quest difficulty—the harder quests tend to kill off your adventurers (who evidently do not go about their work in teams) but also have the best magical items, and advance the adventurer faster. The more magic-using types you have in your kingdom, the more magic power you accrue, and the more spells you can cast on your enemy's provinces, ranging from the anemic Call Lightning to the impressive Death Spell or Creeping Doom. Another handy spell is Animate Dead, which gives you a band of permanent undead warriors (at the possible cost of worsening your alignment).

When you attack an enemy province (or are attacked), the game switches to a top-

down view of your troops, rather like *Walls of Rome*, but with a larger scale. You can then control one of your men, sending him wandering around the field and engaging in heroic combat. He is followed by a band of like-minded troops. The battle system I have thus described is the weakest part of the game. It is quite hard to control your man, and the battle is boring! I tried and tried to get used to it, and use it to my advantage, but in the end I gave up, and simply clicked on the Fast Combat button every time. The computer seemed to do as good a job fighting for me as I did for myself, and it did it a whole lot quicker! There was a lot of programming and art that went into the battle system, but I bemoan the crappy design that made it utterly useless.

The enemy's AI is not particularly advanced. I noticed a tendency for one of my foes to build an entire army out of nothing but ballistas. While this army was hard to beat, it was also his downfall. The ballistas cost so much and take so long to build that my army was much larger, and he couldn't afford to defend most of his provinces. Though I couldn't beat his ballistas, I gobbled up his provinces two and three in a turn, while he would march his invincible horde into my territory and conquer one province. In the end, he'd lost so many territories, he couldn't afford to replace his losses and build keeps. I finished off his army with magic (Death Spells, etc.).

For each campaign you win, your character advances in level, so you want to complete as many campaigns as possible. Alas, another serious flaw in this otherwise fun game is the endgame. For reasons that are beyond my comprehension, to win this game you must conquer every single province! This is quite tedious, since after you've conquered, say, over half of Mystara, the rest of the game is pretty much a foregone conclusion. Unfortunately, you must keep juggling the rest of your imperial responsibilities, maintaining troops, while trying to scoop up the rest of the lands. It's dull since there's no longer any question as to the outcome. I wish that the designers of *Fantasy Empires* had realized this obvious (to me) fact, and let you win at some earlier point—such as when you own half or two-thirds of the provinces. At any point, it really bites to make me fight to the finish. *Masters of Orion* admirably allowed your character to take over control of the galaxy well before the game had degraded into an exercise in tedium.

In general, this game is fun, and I recommend it to anyone who likes games such as *Empire*, *Masters of Orion*, or *Command HQ*. However, if you are primarily a role-player with no real knowledge of strategic games, don't be seduced into starting out on this one because "it's like an RPG." It's not, but that doesn't mean it can't be enjoyed in its own right.

## Game tips

1. You may as well choose the Neutral alignment for your first character (you're not allowed to choose Chaotic) and go Chaotic as soon as the game lets you. This costs you some money when you first change, but there are no benefits that I could detect from being Lawful. If you're Chaotic you get to use the handy Undead troops at will, but Lawful and Neutral types are supposed to refrain from overuse of these dudes.

2. If you attack an enemy castle and have no siege equipment, the result of the fight will be that all your troops are killed, and the foe wins the battle. Pretty serious, eh? The manual doesn't say just how one-sided such battles are, so be forewarned. The lesson: Bring battering rams and catapults with you. The bigger the castle's walls, the more rams you need—apparently they're used up in the attack.

3. Build some temples and sorcerous towers way behind your lines and raise up wizards and clerics therein. It's quite useful to have these magician types, and there's no need to put them up on the front lines, where they can be killed or their provinces conquered. Each magician you have ups your kingdom's "magic power," enabling you to cast spells on the enemy.

4. The best spell for general purposes is the wondrous Death Spell. I love this spell. It kills off around 50% or more of the total enemy troops in a province. My favorite use is to locate a province that holds several hundred enemies, then cast three or four Death Spells on it in a row. Hey, presto! The enemy's numbers are dropped to around 20-30 guys, easy meat for any real army.

## WALLS OF ROME

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IBM and compatibles

Mindcraft

Designed by: Ali Atabek, Scott Baker, Paul Kellner, James Thomas

Project coordinator: Paul Kellner

Lead programmer: James B. Thomas

Art: Scott Baker, Steve Beam, Steve Burke, Juan L. Galceran

*Walls of Rome* is a tactical war game about sieges in the time of the Roman Empire. Mindcraft recommends that you have at least a 386 with two MB of memory. *Walls of Rome* absolutely requires a mouse, Microsoft or Logitech compatible.

In this game, you take the role of attacker or defender in an assault on a fortified camp of some sort. The art of siege was fairly advanced during ancient times (technical capabilities actually dwindled during the Dark Ages, which is part of the reason that castles were considered so impregnable then), and you get a pretty impressive assortment of weapons, troops, and techniques, ranging from Phoenicians to Roman auxiliaries, to cavalry, and from siege towers to greek fire.

In a typical battle, each side receives a few thousand troops. One side gets to set

up inside the fort, while the other lurks in a couple of barracks far off to one side of the field. To launch an assault, you select a band of soldiers from your barracks, give them instructions, and off they go! Irritatingly, they do not always choose the best route to get somewhere—or even a particularly intelligent route. More than once, I had managed to get ladders up on the western side of the defending fort, and then decided that I wanted ladders on the east side, too. When I selected a unit of ladder-equipped soldiers and indicated that I wanted them to assault the eastern wall of the fort, the jerks decided to walk clear round the fort to the west, where the ladders were already present, then try to plow through the interior of the fort to get to the eastern edge. Naturally, they were killed. So keep an eye on the lame-brained troops under your command, or they may well do something you'll regret.

You get three levels of Zoom on the map, and unlike some other games I've played, you use every level of Zoom repeatedly. You need to see the whole map, the close-in view, and the super-Zoom in which individual soldiers are represented. There's a lot of switching from view to view.

The game's realism is far from sophisticated—everyone has a lot of greek fire all the time (a substance actually invented and used by the Byzantine Empire, hundreds of years after the time of *Walls of Rome*'s setting). The defending forts have such medieval features as crenellations, and worse, are not nearly as impressive in defense as the real thing. In a real assault on a fort, the attacker would expect to lose many more men than the defender, yet I was able consistently to lose fewer men when I was attacking. Other little glitches are either amusing or irritating, depending on how much "realism" you demand from a computer simulation. The exploding catapult bombs were pretty funny, to my way of thinking.

A more serious flaw is that it doesn't seem like a siege—in a "real" siege, you have won 75% of the fight when you finally get a breach in the walls. In *Walls of Rome*, once you breach, the fight has only begun. This seems wrong somehow. Also, when you penetrate the walls, the defenders don't start running for inner defenses or form a new line or anything. They just hang around, or pour out of their barracks to fight you. It all seems very chaotic.

If you are looking for fun instead of realism, *Walls of Rome* delivers, at least to a certain extent. It's sure fun to watch the little troops fight. It's a riot to build siege towers, or bombard the defenders with your ballistas and catapults. When a defender is killed, he leaves a little corpse behind, different in appearance for every troop type—if he's been burned with greek fire, the corpse looks toasty. If he's been impaled with a ballista bolt, the skewering missile is visible. That kind of attention to

detail may not help the strategic planning any, but it made me grin.

The manual is riddled with flaws. Some of these are pretty basic. For instance, the text states that a tunnel in progress is marked by green squares, but the display actually shows red squares. More seriously, the tutorial asks you to select PLACE LADDERS, but there is no such command. I wondered what I'd done wrong (it was actually referring to RAISE LADDERS). The list goes on. There's no excuse for this kind of shenanigans. Presumably the manual was completed before the software was finished, and changes were made in the software. But why change "Place Ladders" to "Raise Ladders"? One is not clearer than the other. I hate this kind of change. Only a needlessly picky change-for-change's-sake explains this, and that does not reflect well on the team that completed this project. There are many other such errors in the manual. Worse, the writing in the manual is unclear. It's not clear from reading just how a battering ram or a siege tower is raised and used. (You have to push it right up against the wall.) It doesn't tell you that a brown tinge to a selected area means that the area you've chosen is illegal. The manual leaves all sorts of important things out, or explains them poorly. Your only recourse is to play the tutorial several times, trying different techniques. Unfortunately, the tutorial does not provide you with a battering ram to test out, so you'll need to load the first "real" scenario and try out the ram in that to see how it works. Good luck.

You are able to build your own scenarios with *Walls of Rome*, and play them or trade them with a friend, if you have a friend who also owns this game. That's a worthwhile feature. You can find out for sure whether or not the game's versions of Phoenicians are actually able to beat the Romans no matter how many of them are present. You also can do open field actions using this technique (to some extent), by having a little dinky fort and tons of defenders who pour out of the fort to confront the enemy cavalry in the field.

In general, I liked *Walls of Rome*. While it's not realistic, it's colorful, and has plenty of replay value. If you're interested in a warlike game combining strategy and an arcadelike look (but not feel), you could do a lot worse.

## Game tips

1. When undermining a wall, choose a fairly narrow frontage to dig under. Your diggers will work a lot faster.

2. After a while, your soldiers manning a ballista or catapult run out of greek fire. To avoid this problem, periodically reinforce or relieve the original group with new blood, preferably carrying a new load of greek fire.

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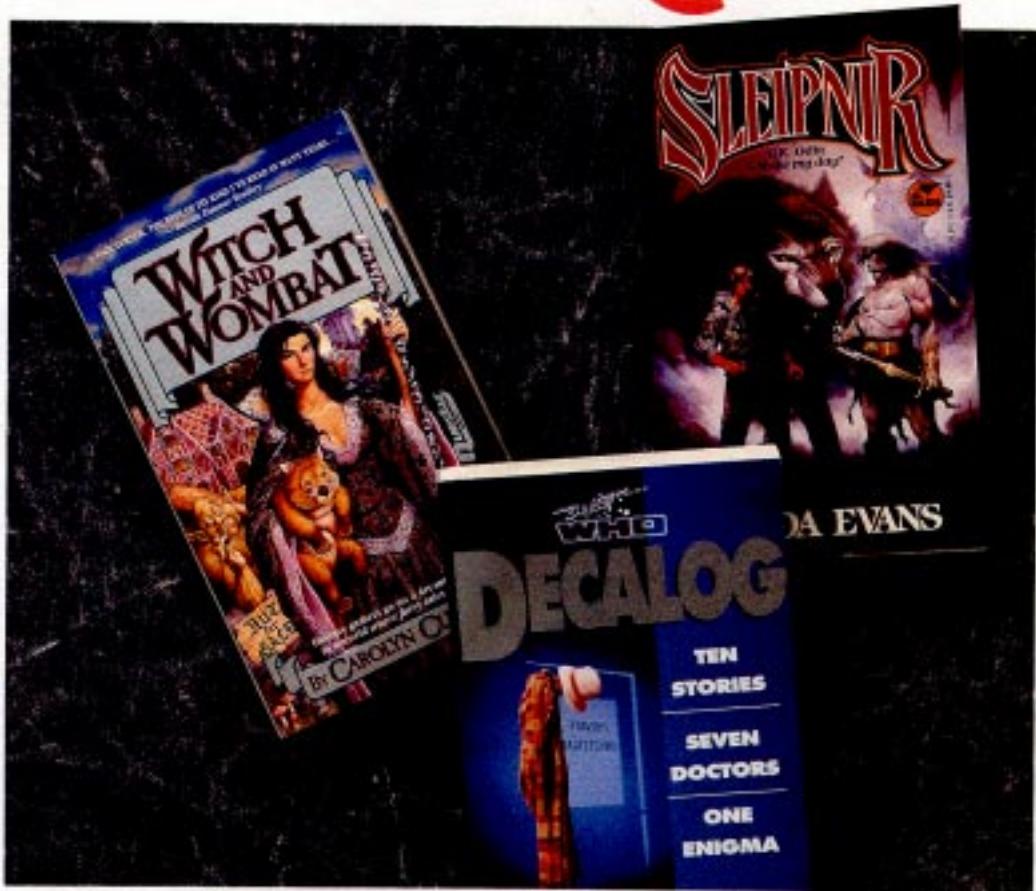


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# The ROLE of Books

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## Of gods, Doctors, and Holmes

### THE MAGIC AND THE HEALING

Nick O'Donohoe

Ace 0-441-00053-3 \$4.99

The book reviewer's art often is the art of finding the right way to hedge one's praise, to dispense compliments while acknowledging a book's limitations.

Nick O'Donohoe's new novel presents just the opposite problem. *The Magic and the Healing* is sufficiently impressive that the challenge is to find ways to talk about it without trailing off into awed superla-

tives and sounding thoroughly dazed.

From the outside, it looks like just another fantasy about college students recruited to save a magical world. But it's almost instantly clear that O'Donohoe brings more than the usual adventure plot to his story. His characters, from troubled veterinary student B.J. Vaughan to an extremely uncommon Griffin, are written with extraordinary wisdom and care, and the danger facing the world of Crossroads is unfolded at a quiet, understated pace

that is ultimately more chilling than many a high-octane thriller.

There are, in fact, several parallel plots at work in the novel. Most intimate of these is the personal crisis facing B.J., who has inherited a genetic disease that drove her mother to suicide—but is nonetheless recruited for a mysterious field study program and must then confront a tentative romance. The study group's ever more exotic emergency calls form another plot thread; before the tale is over, we've

watched surgery on unicorns, centaurs, and the aforementioned Griffin. Running behind both chronicles is an undercurrent of rising danger, as opposing leaders marshal their forces for a battle that will decide the future of all Crossroads. Yet this is no high-flown clash of medieval arms, not when one of the combatants is a Vietnam veteran and the enemy leader relies on stolen morphine to keep her werewolf shock troops in line.

What O'Donohoe does that makes *The Magic and the Healing* altogether unique isn't a matter of cleverness or even wit, though the book possesses some measure of each quality. For all that it's a fantasy novel, this is a book with a deep sense of reality about it and a thoughtful blend of cynicism and old-fashioned hope. It is certainly the best, most memorable novel I've read in the last year, if not the last several years, in or out of the fantasy genre.

#### **WITCH AND WOMBAT**

**Carolyn Cushman**

**Questar 0-446-60086-5 \$5.50**

As a veteran reviewer for the SF trade journal *Locus*, Carolyn Cushman covers much the same literary territory discussed in this space. So you'd think that Cushman's expert knowledge of the field would give her a substantial edge over the competition in preparing a fantasy novel of her own.

Not so, to judge by the results. In fact, *Witch and Wombat* is startling for the number of different components its author leaves only half developed at best.

First and most basic of these is the fairytale world where the story takes place. "Fairy tale" is specifically accurate in this case, with inhabitants and geography drawn mostly from the Brothers Grimm and Mother Goose. Cushman tries to give this setting a contemporary spin by unionizing the monsters and exposing them to modern pop culture, but there's no substance behind the facade. The unions are given no reason to exist—there's no strong central authority, no "management" for them to picket. The result is that we don't understand why Hali the witch, Cushman's nominal protagonist, doesn't simply tell Bentwood the troll to go fly a kite when he recruits her for tour-guide duty.

"Nominal" also is an apt description; although Hali and her familiar are the books central characters, they share near-equal on-stage time with a quartet of fantasy gamers who've been told Grimmworld is a virtual-reality theme park. Here, too, half-finished development is the order of the day. Superior-minded Richard Jamison is introduced as a professional game critic, but instead of using Jamison as a vehicle for satire, Cushman makes him spend most of the book as a giant insect that can't speak. More space goes to a romance between another gamer, Oliver, and a girl who's reached Grimmworld by other means, but at the novels end Cushman pulls the rug out

from under both young lovers as well as the reader. Even Bernie, Hali's familiar, isn't really a wombat; he's a former New York pickpocket who gets zapped into wombat form because wombats are supposedly "in." But if there's no one character in the spotlight, neither is the novel an ensemble piece.

Inviting gamers to visit Grimmworld is Bentwood's idea, a response to what's supposedly a psychic energy shortage. But if the fairy realm is in imminent danger of magical collapse from humanity's inattention to its existence, it doesn't show in the story. The locals invoke magical pyrotechnics easily enough, contract monsters have full resurrection benefits, and nobody is so much as recycling eye of newt.

Either a strong plot or plenty of rapid-fire, over-the-top comedy would do the novel worlds of good, but Cushman provides neither commodity. Events meander with deliberate aimlessness for two-thirds of the book before a pattern finally appears, and Cushman's brand of wit avoids slapstick, sight gags, puns, or other outright silliness in favor of mild situational humor that can't carry the story by itself.

As a whole, *Witch and Wombat* is almost worth recommending as a textbook example of how not to put together a story. Logically, a reviewer of Cushman's stature should be unusually sensitive to flaws in literary craft, but rather than avoiding such pitfalls, Cushman seems to have sought them out. The result is a puzzling book that ought to have been much better than it is.

#### **SLEIPNIR**

**Linda Evans**

**Baen 0-671-87594-9 \$4.99**

The first thing I should say about *Sleipnir* is that it did a superlative job of convincing me that I have absolutely no future in the U.S. Army. I'd last about five minutes before somebody like hard-driving, rough-mouthed Randy Barnes would fold me up, stuff me in an envelope, and mail me back to suburbia. Those who aren't comfortable with that level of bloody-minded action had best steer clear of this novel. But don't let the raw ruggedness fool you; hiding under it is an intriguing, startlingly moral tale that neatly crosses Norse myth with modern-day military firepower.

Randy Barnes has a grudge against Odin, who's taken his best Army buddy off to Valhalla against normal procedure. According to the rules, Odin gets warriors who die in battle, and an auto wreck doesn't qualify—especially when Odin engineers the auto wreck. Randy's response is simple and direct. He packs himself a small arsenal and heads for the deepest known caves on Earth, hunting for a back door into Niflheim and a man-to-god showdown with the All-Father.

The resulting journey proves to test even Randy's well-toughened muscles and combat sense to their limits, but he eventually finds what he's looking for—and

more besides. It seems that the mysterious, all-knowing Norns also are interested in Odin's activities, and the fates of more than one of the nine Norse worlds may be at stake. In fact, if Randy isn't both careful and lucky, Ragnarok itself may convene ahead of schedule.

Evans' version of the Norse cosmos is well-researched and portrayed with an authentically Viking enthusiasm, and Randy's military career, shown in flashback, gets the same honest treatment. Behind both these rough-and-ready settings is a thoughtful look at the ethics of revenge and the theology of free will, both of which cost Randy sleep as he travels across the Norse realms on his way to Odin's hall.

What makes *Sleipnir* even more distinctive is that it doesn't just retell the Norse sagas. While remaining eminently faithful to the old stories, Evans pulls off several effective surprises as Randy's hunt moves toward its climax and past it. The ending is likewise effective, solidly wrapping up the quest while leaving room for another adventure.

Again, this is definitely not a novel for those easily offended by graphic violence and strong language, though in Evans' hands both elements are treated skillfully rather than simply tossed in for effect. Readers who like their heroes ambitious and their action bruising will find *Sleipnir* a rewarding roller-coaster ride with a payoff that supplies a touch of wisdom along with all the screaming.

#### **DECALOG**

**Mark Stammers & Stephen James Walker, eds.**

**Doctor Who 0-426-20411-5 \$5.95**

*Doctor Who* is one of science fiction's longest-enduring creations, and one of the most versatile. But *Decalog* is intriguing even for a Whovian project, incorporating short fiction featuring all seven Doctors into a single volume. The stories are further linked by a framing device that finds an amnesiac Doctor in late 1940s Los Angeles, consulting a private investigator for clues to his own identity.

The result is a distinctive set of stories that take off from almost every era of the Doctor's personal history, each yielding its own small memento of the occasion. This is a particular treat for readers well-versed in the Time Lord's televised adventures, who will find a number of familiar characters and adversaries scattered through the anthology. Newcomers to *Doctor Who* will find the collection tougher going, as some of the tales are spun off from TV serials not easily found on cable or commercial video. So while the stories in *Decalog* collectively provide a respectable overview of the Doctor's universe, the book isn't ideal as an introduction to the milieu.

It is, however, a fascinating change of pace for readers used to the consistent, straightforward action-adventure of the

average *Star Trek* novel. The stories in *Decalog* are a diverse lot, with a wide variety of narrative styles and a distinctive British air that calls for attentive reading on the part of its audience. Most distinctive of the ten tales are Marc Platt's "The Duke of Dominoes," which finds the Master in 1930s Chicago pursuing both his lost TARDIS and the last step in yet another bid for ultimate dominion over the cosmos, and "The Book of Shadows," in which Jim Mortimore tangles the first Doctor in a time-paradox that has companion Barbara Wright married to one of Egypt's last Pharaohs.

Other highlights of the book include Andy Lane's "Fallen Angel," in which the second Doctor falls in with an aristocratic burglar and fends off an alien invasion of his own making, and "Lackaday Express," an exotic mix of quantum physics and thwarted romance from Paul Cornell that has the fifth Doctor almost literally body-surfing through space-time.

It's this willingness to push the Whovian envelope, to tell stories that stretch the boundaries of the old TV show's territory, that makes *Decalog* entertaining. While gamers may find the majority of these short adventures difficult to directly adapt either for the old FASA *Doctor Who* role-playing system or the more recent *Time Lord* rules, they're certainly proof that there's plenty of room left in the Doctor's history for new material.

#### THE BEEKEEPER'S APPRENTICE

Laurie R. King

**St. Martin's 0-312-10423-5 \$21.95**

The majority of the Sherlock Holmes novels written in recent years present cases too extraordinary for one reason or another to have seen the light of day until now—tales involving vampires, international conspiracies, royal scandals, or matters of the supernatural. *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* is none of these; indeed, the jacket copy earnestly advises that it is not a Holmes story at all. Yet it is arguably the best and wisest novel about Holmes to see print since Doyle himself took up his pen, and one of the truest to the original stories even as it turns a very different light on the legendary detective.

(Side note: Those who are wondering what a review of a Sherlock Holmes story with absolutely no fantastic or science-fictional elements is doing in this space are referred to the *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective* game; there is, after all, more to role-playing than sword, sorcery, and space opera. Besides which, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* is entirely too good not to receive a recommendation.)

What the novel is not is a Watsonian manuscript. Instead, our narrator is Mary Russell, a young woman of partially American origins who is just 15 years old when she encounters Holmes chasing bees on the Sussex downs. Though Mary's background is utterly alien to Holmes, she has his raw talent for observation and deduc-

tive insight, and so it is that Holmes takes her on as an informal apprentice.

Laurie R. King chronicles the evolution of this unlikely partnership with grace, insight, and no small wit, through the unraveling of small neighborhood puzzles and onward to more complex casework. Her grasp of Holmes' character is sure and deft; what is often dismissed as his indifference toward women is expertly redefined in the context of his Victorian origins. Russell, meanwhile, emerges as a sharp yet vulnerable observer whose often sardonic comments are balanced with enormous respect for Holmes both as detective and as friend.

That may make the novel sound more like a sophisticated coming-of-age tale than a detective story. It's not an inaccurate assessment; the jacket copy is correct in warning readers who expect a straightforward adventure akin to the Basil Rathbone films that they won't find it here.

And yet, the book is just that sort of mystery as well, with ample doses of rapid-fire deduction and an ingeniously diabolical plot hatched by an opponent who's a worthy match for Holmes and Russell. There are bombs, hairs-breadth escapes, mysterious messages, exotic disguises in quantity, and a climax as chilling as any in Holmes' long career. And the gradually evolving bond between the two detectives carries its own element of drama. (Be warned that "bond" in this case is not a synonym for "romance." The relationship between Russell and Holmes is nothing so prosaic.)

*The Beekeeper's Apprentice* is, in the end, simply a remarkable book. Its plotting and sharp-eyed detail alone rank it among the very best Holmesian pastiches, but its publishers are completely justified in claiming higher virtues for King's novel. A good Holmes adventure lingers in your imagination after you finish reading it; Laurie King's characters reach deeper than that, lingering in the heart.

#### Recurring roles

Michael Stackpole's *Once A Hero* (Bantam, \$5.99) finds a veteran gaming novelist writing fantasy in a world of his own for the first time, and it's a thoroughly welcome arrival. Alternate chapters chronicle the long-ago life of Neal Elfward, legendary (and presently dead) human warrior, and the granddaughter of his trusted elven companion (who wants to bring Neal back to life). As usual, Stackpole displays a solid grasp of strategy and a taste for distinctive magic.

A slimmer but equally entertaining light fantasy comes reliably from Anne Logston's pen: *Dagger's Edge* (Ace, \$4.99) is set in her familiar "Shadow" universe, but its protagonist is a generation younger than her previous heroines, and Shadow herself is now a bemused aunt. Nonetheless, Logston retains a deft hand with plot and a gifted eye for character; her polished yet unaffected style is among the most read-

able in the genre.

Don Callander's *Geomancer* (Ace, \$4.99) continues the author's series about Douglas Brightglade and his fiance, Murn, in his own somewhat more flowery vein, though no less cheerfully. The intrigues are more complex this time, however, as our heroes travel to far-off Choin to head off a war and locate an elusive wizard.

A step up the scale is *A Cast of Corbies* (Baen, \$5.99) which has Mercedes Lackey and Josepha Sherman joining forces to launch a "Bardic Choices" series running in loose parallel to Lackey's "Bardic Voices" novels. This one is a knowledgeable theater yarn, predictable in outline but enjoyable and suspenseful in execution.

Sherman also has a new solo novel out, a young-adult fantasy called *Gleaming Bright* (Walker, \$16.95). Though her plot follows the traditional form, in which an untried youngster must prove her maturity by challenging a dangerous magical threat, Sherman's execution is as crisp and refreshing as ever, and her evocation of the mythical lands on the borders of Faerie is especially well-done.

Fred Saberhagen, meanwhile, has a new Dracula novel out. *Seance for a Vampire* (Tor, \$21.95) brings the Count back into contact with Sherlock Holmes for an adventure involving fraudulent psychics, lost treasure, and several mad Russians. The transitions between Dracula's narration and Watson's are sometimes shaky, and there's more of Holmes than there is of the Count, but it's still a cleverly conceived adventure—though not on a literary par with *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*.

*Cat Scratch Fever* (Del Rey, \$5.99) is Tara K. Harper's latest novel, but a quick read suggests that it's also her first serious misfire. Key questions about the governance of her stranded human colony world go unanswered, with disturbing implications for those who oppose a number of decidedly amoral yet sanctioned social practices. And there's surprisingly little real interaction between Tsia, Harper's heroine, and the big cats with whom she's linked by a telepathy-inducing virus.

That same amorality, to a lesser degree, crops up in *Out of This World* (Del Rey, \$20.00), first in a fantasy/SF trilogy from Lawrence Watt-Evans. In this case, though, there's an excuse: A mysterious entity known as Shadow is consuming the life-energy of several linked dimensions, and may drain our Earth if it isn't stopped. The tone darkens as the book moves forward, which creates a strange and not entirely pleasant read.

Finally, the literary side of the *Star Trek* universe continues to flourish, with Lois Tilton's *Betrayal* (Pocket, \$5.50) adding another winner to the tales of *Deep Space Nine*. Tilton smoothly juggles Cardassian intrigues and carefully rigged terrorist explosives to create a volatile tale that will keep readers alert right up to the last page.

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# Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions. (SASEs are being returned.)

This month, the sage considers a few more questions about magical effects in the AD&D® game, and turns his attention to liches and other undead.

**If a character voluntarily forgoes a saving throw vs. a spell cast at her, but the spell is not the one she expected, does she still get a saving throw? For example, if a priest offers to cast a heal spell but instead casts a harm spell, what happens?**

You've picked a bad example, because *heal* and *harm* don't have saving throws. In any case, the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* makes it clear that once a character chooses to fail a saving throw, it fails even if the character was duped about the nature of the spell (see pages 65-66). The same applies to touch-delivered spells with no saving throws, such as *heal* and *harm*.

**What player in his right mind would choose the sha'ir kit for wizards in the AL-QADIM® setting? The incredible restrictions of their spell-casting abilities and their inability to create magical items make them an absurd kit for an adventuring wizard. Based on what I can make of their gen-related abilities, it could conceivably take a sha'ir as long to cast a simple *cantrip* as it would to cast a *fireball*. Beyond that, a sha'ir might not even be able to cast a critically needed spell at the right time because the sha'ir's gen might be delayed in getting it and might not get it at all.**

To answer your first question, any player with a smidgen of imagination and wit should consider a sha'ir, unless she has no interest in playing a spell-casting character. Apart from a few minor technical errors, you seem to have a pretty clear idea of the sha'ir's weaknesses. A sha'ir casts spells in the same amount of time as

any other wizard does, (*Cantrip* has an initiative modifier of 1, slightly faster than a *fireball*'s initiative modifier of 3.) Most sha'irs can get *cantrip* from their gens more quickly than they can get *fireball*; sha'irs of 5th level or higher must wait 1d6 + 1 rounds for the first-level *cantrip* and 1d6 + 3 rounds for the third-level *fireball*. Note that sha'irs of 4th level or less must wait 1d6 + 3 turns for a *fireball* and there is a very good chance that their gens will return empty handed; the time is measured in turns because a normal AD&D game wizard of the sha'ir's level could not normally cast the spell (see the *Arabian Adventures* book, page 98). Note that a sha'ir who has acquired and cast a *cantrip* spell can freely create minor spell effects for as long as the spell lasts (one hour per caster level) just as any other wizard can—the gen doesn't have to go and get each individual effect.

The sha'ir has other advantages that make the kit very attractive to thoughtful players of any persuasion. Role-players should jump at the chance to play out the relationship between a sha'ir and his gen. Encounters with merchants are likely to take on a new flavor if the party sha'ir recognizes genie craftsmanship in the goods offered for sale. As the sha'ir rises in level, the player can look forward to forging alliances with genies of all sorts; constructing a genie prison and negotiating terms with the genie who is to occupy it would be a noteworthy event in any campaign.

Power gamers should absolutely drool over a sha'ir. (Boy, I can hear the howls of protest even as I type this, so don't bother writing in, just read on.) I haven't forgotten your objection to the delay sha'irs must endure once they've sent their gens to get spells. Frankly, this isn't a terrible problem for any player who has gotten beyond the *fireball*—everything-that-moves theory of play.

Consider this: A sha'ir never runs out of spells. It is true that many encounters will be over before a sha'ir's gen can bring even a first-level spell. But PC wizards who are in the habit of tossing out spells every melee round are going run out of spells sooner or later—probably sooner. Once a standard wizard's allotment of spells are gone, the character has very little to contribute to the adventure unless he has a wand, staff, scroll, or other magical item that can produce spell-like effects.

A sha'ir's ability to keep sending his gen for an unending supply of spells is incredibly potent. A 5th-level mage can carry only seven spells at time (4 first-, 2 second-, and 1 third-level spell); that means he has only seven rounds of ammunition when a fight starts. If the character casts preparatory spells on himself, such as *shield*, *strength*, and *detect invisibility*, nearly half his arsenal is gone. Truly useful but unspectacular spells such as *fly* and *haste* come at the cost of the character's one "big gun," *fireball* or *lightning bolt*. Now consider a 5th-level sha'ir; all he needs is a little time and he can cast a *strength* spell on every fighter in the party. He also can make everybody *fly*. Then, he can cast a *shield*, and a *detect & visibility* on himself. Later, if the party needs *knock* or a *detect magic*, spell the gen can just go get them. The sha'ir might not be able to pour in the firepower during a fight, but he can prepare for a fight by sending his gen out for a potent spell, such as *fireball*, ahead of time. If the sha'ir doesn't cast the spell right away, he can hold it for up to 30 minutes before using it. In this manner, he can pretty much always have one spell ready to cast.

The sha'ir's bag of tricks still isn't exhausted. If he's willing to wait a few turns, he can try for a fourth- or fifth-level spell such as *polymorph self*, *fire shield*, or *teleport*. The spell might not ever arrive, but most players will admit that it's nice to have a chance to get it. Also note that sha'irs can use any magical item a wizard can use, so a sha'ir can fall back on scrolls, wands, and the like while the gen is away, just as a normal wizard does when the spells run out.

In any case, players do not have to be out of their minds to play sha'irs, but they do have to be willing to use their heads.

**What happens to sha'irs who find themselves in the RAVENLOFT® setting? Can gens still get spells for their masters?**

This is up to the DM. If you've created a Zakharan domain, there certainly should be portals that gen (and only gen) can use to leave the Demiplane of Dread and go in search of spells. Likewise, it's reasonable to assume that the powers would allow gens to leave the demiplane when searching for spells. After all, they'll be coming back. Other creatures with planar connections can temporarily leave the demiplane.

For example, ghosts still can become ethereal, they're just limited to the section of the border ethereal adjacent to the demiplane.

**Can paladins and rangers cast any spells from the new spheres list in the Tome of Magic?**

I suppose paladins could receive spells from the Law sphere and rangers could get spells from the Travelers sphere.

**Will a ring of free action prevent the wearer from becoming paralyzed?**

Although the material on page 72 of the DUNGEON MASTER Guide suggests that paralysis is equivalent to magical *hold* effects, I don't recommend that you allow a *ring of free action* or a priest's *free action* spell to negate touch-delivered paralysis from creatures such as ghouls and carrion crawlers. Nor do I recommend that you allow *free action* to negate paralytic poisons.

From a game-balance standpoint, *free action* is powerful enough without extending its effects to include a whole new class of special attacks. From a game-logic standpoint, *free action* prevents the recipient's movement from being hindered, but it does not prevent all forms of outside control. Magical *sleep*, *charm*, *beguiling*, *hypnosis*, *time stop*, etc. still work on the

character, as do debilitating and deadly poisons. Your game will be better served if you include paralysis with the latter group of effects.

**The magical frost brand sword can extinguish fires if the blade is thrust into the flame. However, the power has a radius of 10'. Does the sword wielder have to touch the flame with the sword, or does she just have to be within 10'?**

I'm inclined to follow the item description DMG, page 185) fairly closely. To use the flame-extinguishing power, the wielder must thrust the sword into a flame (and maybe speak a command word). When this happens there is a 50% chance that all normal and most magical flames within a 10' radius will go out.

**A gem of insight (DMG, page 169) raises the possessor's Intelligence and Wisdom scores after three months and works once every 50 years. Does this mean that an elf who possessed the gem for 300 years and three months would gain seven points of Intelligence and Wisdom?**

No; the elf gains only one point of Intelligence and Wisdom from the gem. The elf could not benefit from the gem more than once.

**What happens when wild mages abandon wild magic? Page 20 of The Complete Wizard's Handbook says specialists retain any extra spells they already have, but a wild mage's extra spells are wild magic, which only wild mages can use.**

I recommend a wild mage who drops wild magic lose her extra spell slots, the + 10% bonus to learn wild magic spells, the -5% penalty to learn other spells, and the ability to control *wands of wonder* and similar magical items.

You can apply this reasoning to other specialists as well. In lieu of the rather lengthy and complicated rules for dropping a specialty in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*, you can assume the former specialist's new approach to the art of magic cancels out extra spell slots and also the specialist bonuses and penalties to learning new spells.

**Can undead creatures such as liches and vampires use potions, oils, and ointments?**

Any creature can use a potion as long as it is corporeal and can swallow the liquid or at least pour it down its gullet. The act of imbibing the potion releases its magic—a potion doesn't have to be digested. Non-corporeal creatures, such as spectres, cannot use potions. Likewise, anything that has a body and a way to spread an oil



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or ointment over its body can use a magical oil or ointment. See the next question for an important exception to the forgoing statements.

### **How do undead creatures recover hit points? Can they recover hit points?**

There's nothing in the various monster descriptions to imply that damage to undead creatures is permanent, so it seems likely that they can regain hit points somehow. Vampires can regenerate, and regain hit points fairly quickly. Other undead can recover hit points by resting, just like living creatures do (probably by absorbing negative energy and using it to reconstruct their bodies). The DM is free to decide how quickly hit points are recovered, but I suggest a maximum of one hit point every 24 hours. Note that healing spells do not work on non-living creatures, as "Sage Advice" pointed out last month. I strongly suggest you extend this limitation to include *potions of healing*, *Keoghtom's ointment*, and similar items. The DM might, however, introduce spells and items that can heal the undead; such items probably would be very dangerous to the living.

### **How does sunlight affect undead creatures other than vampires?**

Most DMs I know assume that undead creatures avoid sunlight when they can.

Other than that, sunlight has no special effects on the undead, but check the individual monster descriptions to be sure. Spectres, for example, not only hate light, but also are powerless in daylight.

Before somebody asks, a spectre rendered powerless by daylight can only move. It cannot attack or drain levels. Because it hates light so much, a spectre must try to move to a dark place; it can't go joyriding in the sunlight.

### **What happens to a lich when it casts a spell such as wish that causes aging or permanency, which reduces Constitution?**

A lich who casts a *wish* spell gets five years older. This doesn't have much effect on the lich, but it does shorten its unlife by five years. If a lich casts enough *wish* spells, it eventually "dies" and falls into dust. Note also that casting a *wish* spell forces the character to rest in bed for 2d4 days. A lich must rest in its tomb for the required time after casting a *wish*. Because this leaves the lich vulnerable to attack, I doubt that liches cast *wish* spells very often.

Because liches once were living characters, it's a good bet that they have a Constitution score, which is determined by rolling 3d6 or whatever method the campaign employs. The DM is free to decide what effect the lich's transformation into

an undead creature has on the Constitution score. It might be reduced (dead people are not at all well), or it might be increased (dead creatures can pretty much ignore injuries that would imperil a living creature, and they don't have to worry about getting sick). In any case, once the lich's Constitution score falls to zero it "dies."

### **How do you determine a lich's hit points? Do they have four-sided hit dice?**

A lich has 11d8 plus one hit point per level over 11th. For example, a lich who is a 17th-level wizard has 11d8 + 6 hit points.

### **Can archliches be turned?**

An archlich is a lich that does not have an evil alignment; I suggest that you do not allow good or neutral priests to turn them. However, you might want to allow good or neutral priests to befriend and control archliches of the same alignment just as evil priests can control evil undead (see *PH*, page 103). Evil priests can turn archliches just like they can turn paladins. Because archliches are so rare, you might want to penalize evil priests three levels, just as they are when turning paladins. That is, a 6th-level priest uses the 3rd-level column when turning a paladin or archlich.

Ω

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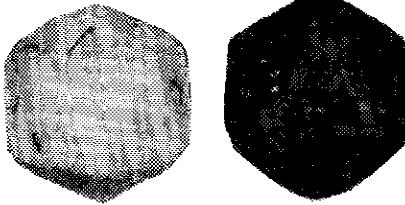
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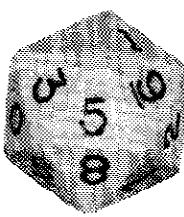
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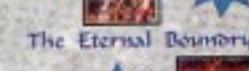
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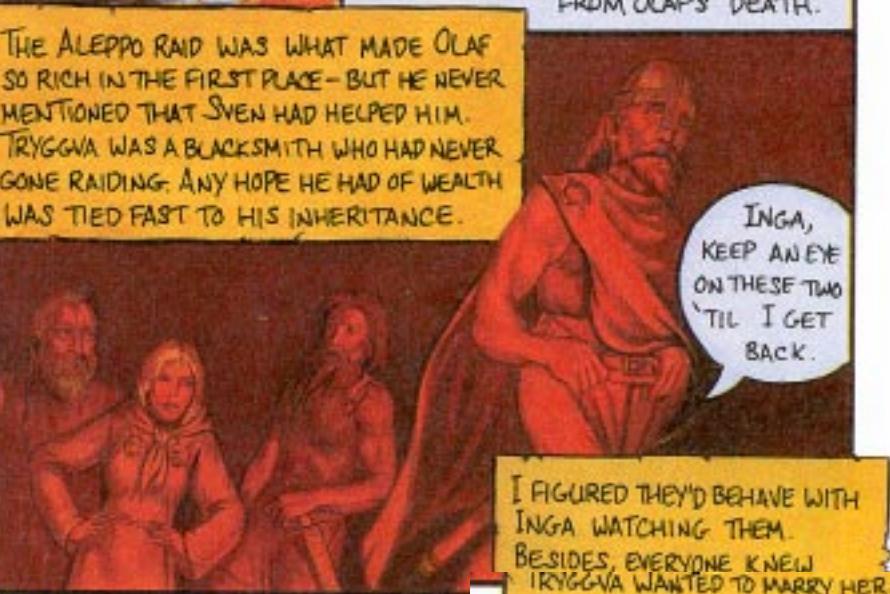
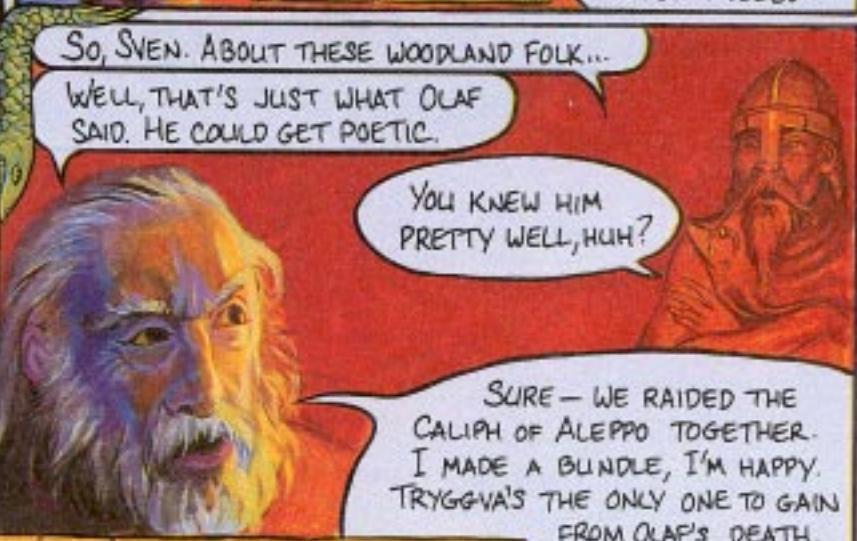
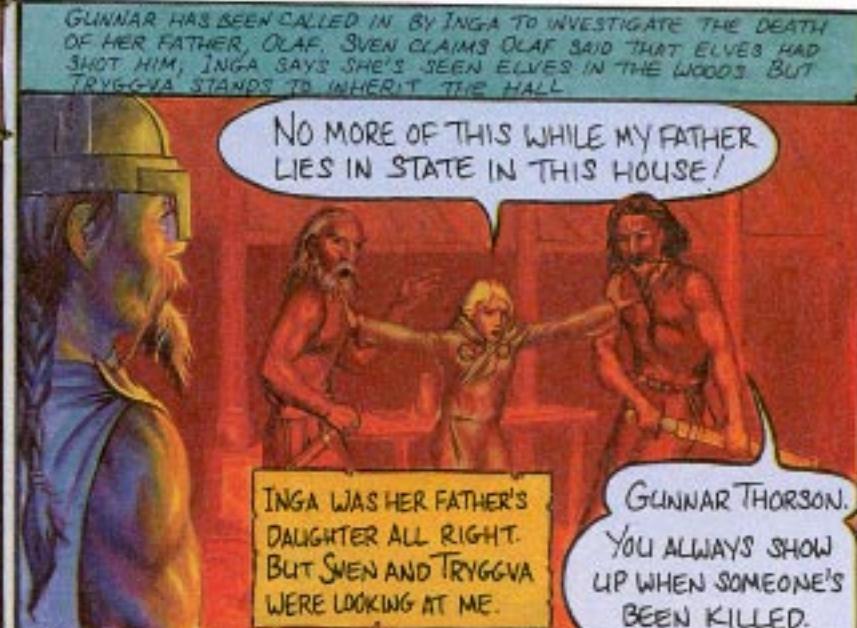
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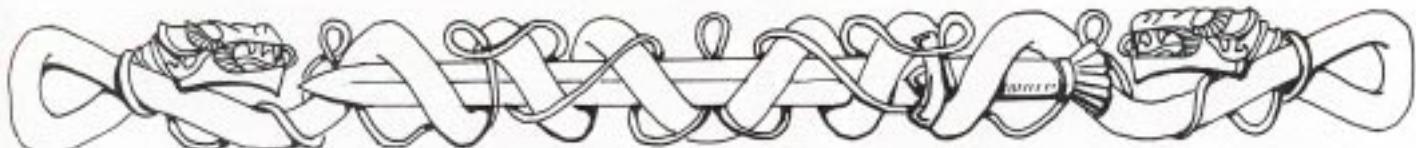


## GUNNAR THORSON

"A CASE OF ELF-SHOT" PART 2



I FIGURED THEY'D BEHAVE WITH INGA WATCHING THEM. BESIDES, EVERYONE KNEW TRYGGVA WANTED TO MARRY HER.



I STOOD FOR A LONG TIME STARING AT THE BODY OF MY DEAD FRIEND. HE WAS OLD, BUT STILL TOUGH AS NAILS. I HATED TO SEE HIM GONE.

HE HADN'T LOST ANY BLOOD, BUT I DIDN'T LIKE THAT SWELLING AROUND HIS NECK. THAT DIDN'T GIVE ME ENOUGH TO GO ON, SO I KEPT LOOKING AROUND.

BUT AFTER A FEW MINUTES SEARCHING THE PANTRIES WITH A BONDSMAN, I GOT LUCKY.

I DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO ASK HIM IF IT HAD BEEN AN ELF.

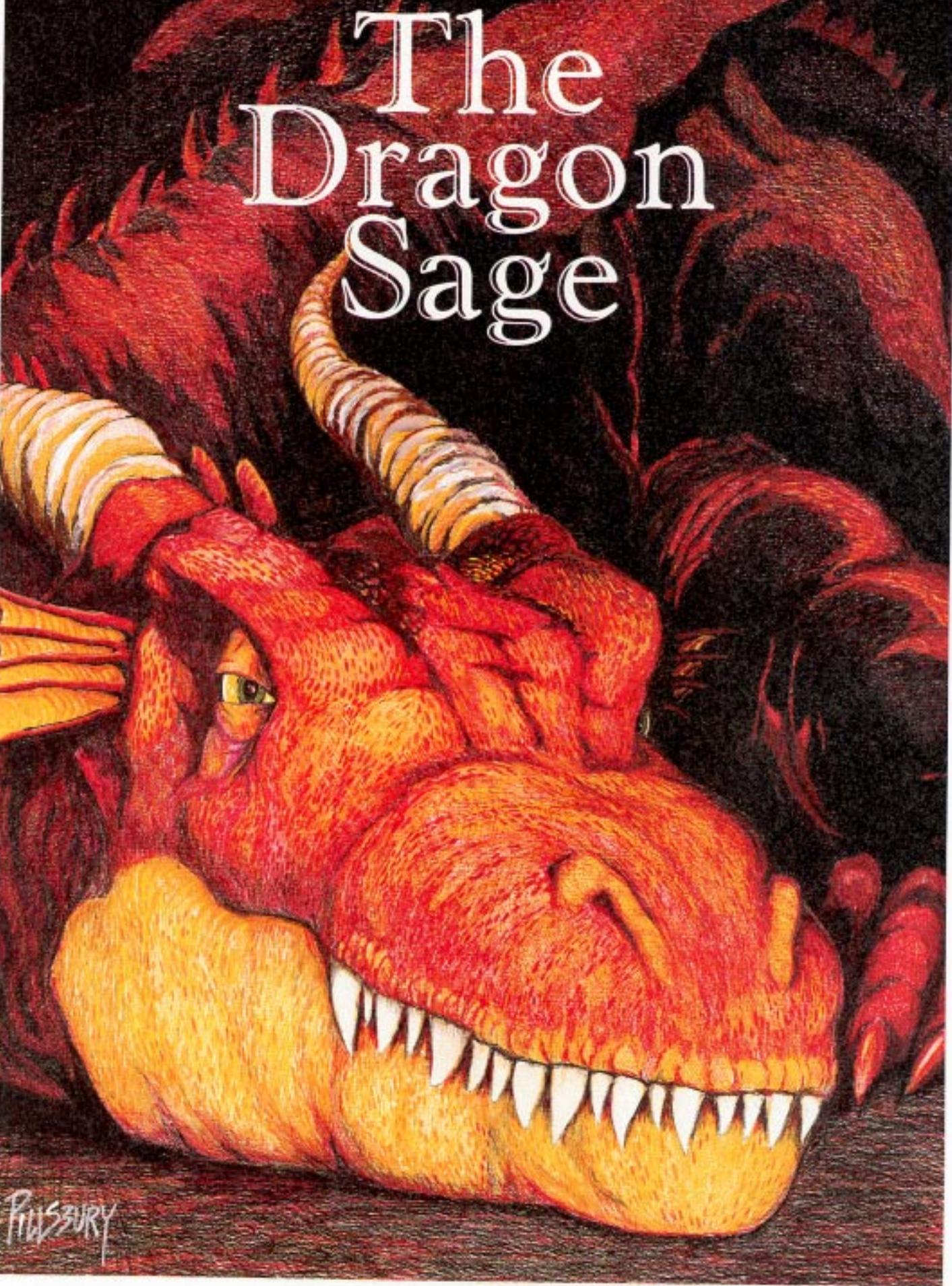
I'D STOP SERVING THE MEAD TONIGHT.

I ASKED THE REMAINING BONDSMEN IF THEY KNEW WHERE INGA HAD BEEN HER ELVES. THEY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT ELVES, BUT ONE TOLD ME SHE HAD BEEN INGA RUNNING BACK FROM A LITTLE DELL IN THE FOREST, NOT A STONE'S THROW FROM THE HALL.

BUT A STONE'S THROW CAN BE AN ETERNITY.

IT CAN LEAD TO THE MISTY PLACES WHERE A FAIRY MOUND MIGHT BE JUST ANOTHER GRAVE.

# The Dragon Sage



PILLSBURY

# A new character kit for the COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ boxed set

by Bill Slavicsek

Artwork by Joseph Pillsbury

The rumors are true. Now you can create and run dragon player characters with the rules and campaign material presented in the new AD&D® game's

COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ boxed set. Want to play a dragon like the ones detailed in the *Monstrous Manual*? Then the dragon PC is for you. But the options available to the

civilized dragons of the Io's Blood island chain don't stop there. You could roll up a silver dragon priest, a brass dragon mage, or even a sapphire dragon psionicist. It's

Priest spell generator	
<b>First-level spells</b>	
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>	
01-05	Animal Friendship
06-09	Bless
10-13	Combine
14-18	Command
19-24	Create Water
25-29	Cure Light Wounds
30-34	Detect Evil
35-38	Detect Magic
39-42	Detect Poison
43-46	Detect Snares and Pits
47-50	Endure Heat/Endure Cold
51-54	Entangle
55-58	Faerie Fire
59-63	Invisibility to Animals
64-67	Invisibility to Undead
68-72	Light
73-76	Locate Animals or Plants
77-80	Magical Stone
81-84	Pass Without Trace
85-88	Protection from Evil
89-91	Purify Food and Drink
92-94	Remove Fear
95-98	Sanctuary
99-100	Shillelagh
<b>Second-level spells</b>	
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>	
01-04	Aid
05-08	Augury
09-12	Barkskin
13-16	Chant
17-20	Charm Person or Mammal
21-24	Detect Charm
25-28	Dust Devil
29-32	Enthrall
33-36	Find 'Raps
37-40	Fire Trap
41-44	Flame Blade
45-48	Goodberry
49-51	Heat Metal
52-55	Hold Person
56-60	Know Alignment
61-63	Messenger
64-67	Obscurement
68-71	Produce Flame
72-75	Resist Fire/Resist Cold
76-78	Silence, 15' Radius
79-80	Slow Poison
81-83	Snake Charm
84-86	Speak with Animals
87-89	Spiritual Hammer
90-92	Trip
93-94	Warp Wood
95-98	Withdraw
99-100	Wyvern Watch
<b>Third-level spells</b>	
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>	
01-03	Animate Dead
04-07	Call Lightning
08-10	Continual Light
11-14	Create Food and Water
15-17	Cure Blindness or Deafness
18-20	Cure Disease
21-24	Dispel Magic
25-27	Feign Death
28-30	Flame Walk
31-33	Glyph of Warding
34-36	Hold Animal
37-40	Locate Object
41-43	Magical Vestment
44-46	Meld Into Stone
47-50	Negative Plane Protection
51-53	Plant Growth
54-57	Prayer
58-60	Protection from Fire
61-64	Pyrotechnics
65-67	Remove Curse
68-70	Remove Paralysis
71-74	Snare
75-77	Speak with Dead
78-80	Spike Growth
81-83	Starshine
84-86	Stone Shape
87-90	Summon Insects
91-93	Tree
94-96	Water Breathing
97-100	Water Walk
<b>Fourth-level spells</b>	
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>	
01-04	Abjure
05-08	Animal Summoning I
09-12	Call Woodland Beings
13-16	Cloak of Bravery
17-20	Control Temperature, 10' Radius
21-24	Cure Serious Wounds
25-28	Detect Lie
29-32	Divination
33-36	Free Action
37-40	Giant Insect
41-44	Hallucinatory Forest
45-48	Hold Plant
49-52	Imbue with Spell Ability
53-56	Lower Water
57-60	Neutralize Poison
61-64	Plant Door
65-68	Produce Fire
69-72	Protection from Evil, 10' Radius
73-76	Protection from Lightning
77-80	Reflecting Pool
81-84	Repel Insects
89-92	Speak with Plants
93-96	Spell Immunity
97-98	Sticks to Snakes
99-100	Tongues
<b>Fifth-level spells</b>	
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>	
01-05	Air Walk
06-09	Animal Growth
10-14	Animal Summoning II
15-18	Anti-Plant Shell
19-22	Atonement
23-26	Commune
27-31	Commune with Nature
32-35	Control Winds
36-39	Cure Critical Wounds
40-44	Dispel Evil
45-48	Flame Strike
49-52	Insect Plague
53-56	Magic Font
57-60	Moonbeam
61-65	Pass Plant
66-69	Plane Shift
70-74	Quest
75-78	Rainbow
79-82	Raise Dead
83-87	Spike Stones
88-91	Transmute Rock to Mud
92-95	True Seeing
96-100	Wall of Fire
<b>Sixth-level spells</b>	
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>	
01-04	Aerial Servant
05-09	Animal Summoning III
10-13	Animate Object
14-18	Anti-Animal Shell
19-22	Blade Barrier
23-27	Conjure Animals
28-31	Conjure Fire Elemental
32-36	Find the Path
37-40	Fire Seeds
41-45	Forbiddance
46-50	Heal
51-54	Heroes' Feast
55-58	Liveoak
59-63	Part Water
64-67	Speak with Monsters
68-72	Stone Tell
73-76	Transmute Water to Dust
77-80	Transport via Plants
81-85	Turn Wood
86-90	Wall of Thorns
91-95	Weather Summoning
96-100	Word of Recall
<b>Seventh-level spells</b>	
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>	
01-04	Animate Rock
05-09	Astral Spell
10-13	Changestaff
14-18	Chariot of Sustarre
19-22	Confusion
23-27	Conjure Earth Elemental
28-31	Control Weather
32-36	Creeping Doom
37-40	Earthquake
41-45	Exaction
46-49	Fire Storm
50-54	Gate
55-58	Holy Word
59-63	Regenerate
64-67	Reincarnate
68-72	Restoration
73-76	Resurrection
77-81	Succor
82-85	Sunray
86-90	Symbol
91-95	Transmute Metal to Wood
96-100	Wind Walk

all in the boxed set.

For those of you who want another option, as well as a different kind of role-playing challenge, we present the dragon sage kit. Keep in mind, you'll need the rules and campaign background from the boxed set to make full use of this new dragon player character kit.

## Dragon Sage kit

Knowledge is power. This philosophy, above all else, defines the dragon sage. Dragons who pursue knowledge to the exclusion of everything else become dragon sages. To these dragons, the what, where, when, and why of a particular subject is as important as the how. However, dragon sages are not reptilian know-it-alls. Most know an awful lot about a few select subjects. It is the rare dragon sage who has access to many fields of expertise.

A dragon sage spends the time between hatching and reaching 1st level learning about his initial field of study, as well as learning the theories and techniques of wizardly and priestly magic. To the young dragon sage, the difference between wizardly and priestly magic is not as significant as the wizards and priests would have everyone believe. As a hatchling PC, a dragon sage receives instruction from a higher-level sage connected to the Council of Wyrms Aerie. During this time of apprenticeship, while a dragon sage gains the experience and treasure necessary to advance to 1st level, she is also learning a selection of spells and preparing a spell book. The spell book contains three spells to start: *read magic*, one additional first-level wizard spell selected randomly by the DM, and one first-level priest spell also selected by the DM. Until the sage reaches 1st level, he must rely on his natural dragon abilities to defend himself from the dangers of the island chain.

Because a dragon sage follows a scholarly approach to both types of magic, he loses the ability other dragons have to shape spells naturally. A dragon sage does not follow the spell progression listed for his dragon type on Table 5: Dragon Information by Age (in the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set). Instead, the sage gains

and uses wizard spells as a wizard does, and priest spells as a priest (though the sage's approach to these isn't faith but scholarly research into methods and techniques).

The spell progression table here lists how many spells a sage can cast at a given level. These spells can be drawn from the sage's collection of wizard or priest spells, but no more than the specified number of spells can be cast in a single day. Dragon sages are limited in their selection of spells, however. They may only learn wizard spells from the schools of lesser/greater divination and conjuration/summoning (see pages 238-239 of the *Player's Handbook*), and priest spells from the spheres of divination and summoning (see pages 240-241 of the *PH*).

**Requirements:** All dragon types with Intelligence scores of 14 or better and Wisdom scores of 13 or better can select this kit.

**Role:** Dragon sages are obsessive characters as far as knowledge is concerned. A dragon sage finds a particular subject that excites him and then researches it until every fact—from the consequential to the mundane—has been committed to memory. If someone needs to know about a given topic, then find a dragon sage. However, as each sage's area of expertise is different, the search may take a while.

Dragon sages are knowledge specialists who concentrate their efforts until they master a specific field, then they select another body of information to study. A sage travels far and wide to uncover every detail about his chosen specialty, or to share that knowledge with others. It is customary to trade treasure for the wisdom of a dragon sage. The standard exchange is treasure worth 100 gp multiplied by the sage's level for student-level knowledge on a subject. Double that for information only an expert could know, and triple it to receive knowledge only a master of the subject could know.

In an adventuring party, a dragon sage may go along to add to his own body of knowledge, or a sage may be assigned by

the Council (or requested by the adventurers) to provide an expert on a particular subject. The dragon sage can be distracted by details, missing the big picture in his search for minutia. He is extremely curious and loves to engage in scholarly conversation. Still, the sage rarely gives up any knowledge for free. Pay in kind for what is given in kind, the sage always says. Sometimes treasure isn't the only form of payment a sage will accept. Knowledge in exchange for knowledge always is an acceptable alternative (if it is knowledge the sage is interested in adding to his collection).

**Combat Proficiencies:** A hatchling dragon sage starts with the claw attack as a bonus proficiency. It receives additional combat proficiencies as listed on Table 10: Dragon Proficiency Slots in the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set. Dragon sages, however, can use combat slots to purchase noncombat proficiencies if they so desire.

**Noncombat Proficiencies:** The proficiencies suggested for the dragon sage are as follows:

\* Bonus Proficiencies: Racial language, Racial bonus (see Book One, Chapter Two of the boxed set), two specific lore slots of the character's choice (received at 1st level).

\* Required Proficiencies:  
Reading/writing (as of 1st level).

\* Recommended Proficiencies (at hatching): Hunting, Languages (high draconic), Observation, Singing, Trick.

\* Recommended Proficiencies (after 1st level): Ancient history, Astrology, Debate, Languages (ancient), Local history, Lore, Sagecraft.

**Equipment:** None. A dragon sage is restricted to items usable by creatures of great size and limited dexterity. What a sage places in his treasure hoard, however, is never restricted. At 1st level, a dragon sage receives a spell book containing three spells, as outlined above, as well as a collection of spell components.

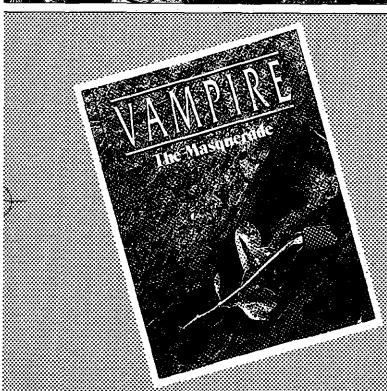
**Special Benefits:** In addition to the bonus claw attack combat proficiency and the two bonus lore noncombat proficiencies (received upon achieving 1st level), a dragon sage starts with one item in its bonded hoard. This item, a gem or precious metal appropriate to the dragon's type, starts with a value of 1,000 gp multiplied by the hatchling's Hit Dice total. A portion of the item is consumed during incubation, so that when the hatchling emerges from its egg, the item is reduced in value. This reduction is equal to the total of the hatchling's Strength and Constitution scores multiplied by 100 gp. Other benefits are described below.

**Spell use:** After slotting the Sagecraft proficiency, a dragon sage can cast both wizard and priest spells according to the spell progression table. The sage is limited to spells from the lesser/greater divination and conjuration/summoning schools of wizardly magic, and the priestly spheres of divination and summoning.

**Dragon Sage Spell Progression Table**  
**Sage level**

	Spell level								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	2	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	3	2	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
5	3	3	2	2	1	—	—	—	—
6	4	3	3	2	2	1	—	—	—
7	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	—	—
8	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	—
9	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1
10	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2
11	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
12	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3

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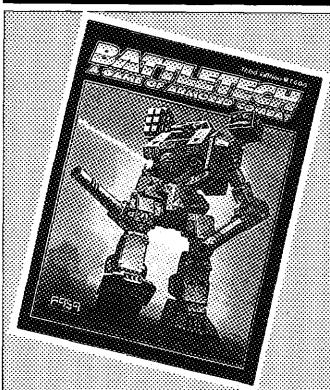
aberdeen / basildon / birmingham  
bolton / bradford / brighton  
bristol (18 merchant st.) / bromley  
cambridge / canterbury / colchester  
crawley / croydon (80, north end)  
darlington / dublin / east kilbride  
edinburgh (10 frederick st.)  
falkirk / gateshead / glasgow  
(parkhead / st enoch) / guildford  
high wycombe / hull / ilford  
kingston upon thames / leeds (50-52,  
albion st.) / lincoln / liverpool  
london (100, oxford st.) / manchester  
milton keynes / northampton  
nottingham (4-5, long row) / oldham  
oxford / portsmouth / sheffield  
southampton / southend / stockport  
swindon / watford

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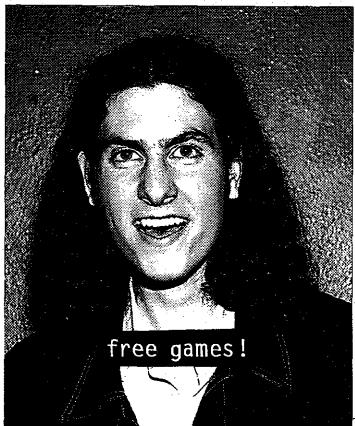
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## Wizard spell generator

### First-level spells

#### 1d100 roll Spell acquired

01-03	Affect Normal Fires
04-05	Alarm
06-08	Armor
09-10	Burning Hands
11-12	Cantrip
13-15	Change Self
16-19	Charm Person
20-21	Chill Touch
22-23	Color Spray
24-25	Comprehend Languages
26-28	Dancing Lights
29-30	Detect Magic
31-33	Detect Undead
34-35	Enlarge
36-38	Erase
39-40	Feather Fall
41-42	Find Familiar
43-44	Friends
45-46	Gaze Reflection
47-49	Grease
50-51	Hold Portal
52-54	Hypnotism
55-58	Identify
59-60	Jump
61-63	Light
64-65	Magic Missile
66-68	Mending
69-70	Message
71-73	Mount
74-75	Nystul's Magical Aura
76	Phantasmal Force
77-78	Protection from Evil
79-80	Read Magic
81-82	Shield
83-84	Shocking Grasp
85-86	Sleep
87-88	Spider Climb
89-90	Spook
91	Taunt
92-93	Tenser's Floating Disk
94-95	Unseen Servant
96-97	Ventriloquism
98-99	Wall of Fog
100	Wizard Mark

### Second-level spells

#### 1d100 roll Spell acquired

01-03	Alter Self
04-05	Bind
06-08	Blindness
09-10	Blur
11-12	Continual Light
13-15	Darkness, 15' Radius
16-19	Deafness
20-21	Deeppockets

**Proficiency benefit:** The dragon sage can use his combat proficiency slots to purchase noncombat proficiencies.

**Lore check bonus:** After a dragon sage purchases the Sagecraft proficiency, he receives special bonuses to all lore checks he is required to make. Lore, a new proficiency described in the boxed set, reflects a character's scholarly knowledge on a given subject. When making lore checks, a sage (with Sagecraft) needs to roll Int -2 for student-level knowledge, Int -4 for expert knowledge, and Int -6 for master knowledge (instead of the normal -3, -6, and -9 respectively).

22-23	Detect Evil	49-50	Lightning Bolt
24-25	Detect Invisibility	50-52	Melf's Minute Meteors
26-28	ESP	53-54	Monster Summoning I
29-30	Flaming Sphere	55-58	Non-Detection
31-33	Fog Cloud	59-61	Phantom Steed
34-35	Fools' Gold	62-65	Protection from Evil, 10' Radius
36-38	Forget	66-68	Protection from Normal Missiles
39-40	Glitterdust	69-71	Secret Page
41-42	Hypnotic Pattern	72-73	Sepia Snake Sigil
43-44	Improved Phantasmal Force	74-76	Slow
45-46	Invisibility	77-79	Spectral Force
47-49	Irritation	80-82	Suggestion
50-51	Knock	83-87	Tongues
52-54	Know Alignment	88-90	Vampiric Touch
55-58	Leomund's Trap	91-93	Water Breathing
59-60	Levitate	94-96	Wind Wall
61-63	Locate Object	97-99	Wraithform
64-65	Magic Mouth	100	DM's Choice

### Fourth-level spells

#### 1d100 roll Spell acquired

01-03	Charm Monster
04-05	Confusion
06-08	Contagion
09-10	Detect Scrying
11-12	Dig
13-15	Dimension Door
16-19	Emotion
20-21	Enchanted Weapon
22-23	Enervation
24-25	Evard's Black Tentacles
26-28	Extension I
29-30	Fear
31-33	Fire Charm
34-35	Fire Shield
36-38	Fire Trap
39-40	Fumble
41-42	Hallucinatory Terrain
43-44	Ice Storm
45-46	Illusionary Wall
47-49	Improved Invisibility
50-51	Leomund's Secure Shelter
52-54	Magic Mirror
55-58	Massmorph
59-60	Minor Creation
61-63	Minor Globe of Invulnerability
64-65	Monster Summoning II
66-68	Otiluke's Resilient Sphere
69-70	Phantasmal Killer
71-72	Plant Growth
73-74	Polymorph Other
75-76	Polymorph Self
77-78	Rainbow Pattern
79-80	Rary's Mnemonic Enhancer
81-82	Remove Curse
83-84	Shadow Monsters
85-86	Shout

### Third-level spells

#### 1d100 roll Spell acquired

01-03	Blink
04-05	Clairaudience
06-07	Clairvoyance
08-10	Delude
11-12	Dispel Magic
13-14	Explosive Runes
15-17	Feign Death
18-19	Fireball
20-22	Flame Arrow
23-24	Fly
25-28	Gust of Wind
29-31	Haste
32-34	Hold Person
35-36	Hold Undead
37-38	Illusionary Script
39-40	Infravision
41-43	Invisibility, 10' Radius
44-46	Item
47-48	Leomund's Tiny Hut

**Special Hindrances:** Dragon sages do not follow the normal dragon spell progression as outlined on Table 5: Dragon Information by Age (Specific) from the boxed set. Instead, they must follow the progression table provided with this kit description. Other hindrances are described below.

**Spell failure:** Any spell cast by a dragon sage has a chance to fail. The chance of spell failure is based on their Wisdom score, plus 15%. So, even a sage with a Wisdom score of 18 has a 15% chance of spell failure.

**Combat penalty:** Dragon sages do not get to add the combat bonus based on their level that

other dragon characters can use, due to their more cerebral approach to life. Instead of the full combat bonus, a dragon sage receives one-half the combat bonus rounded down.

**Wealth Options:** A dragon sage starts play with one item in its bonded hoard (see above).

## New noncombat proficiency Sagecraft (2 slots, Int -2)

Only dragon characters with the dragon sage Kit can select the Sagecraft noncombat proficiency. Once slotted, the sage gains the knowledge and skill to cast both wizard and priest spells of limited

87-90	Solid Fog	13-15	Control Weather	80-83	Simulacrum
91-92	Stoneskin	16-19	Death Fog	84-88	Spell Turning
93-94	Vacancy	20-21	Death Spell	89-93	Statue
95-96	Wall of Fire	22-23	Demi-Shadow Magic	94-95	Teleport Without Error
97-98	Wall of Ice	24-25	Disintegrate	96-97	Vanish
99-100	Wizard Eye	26-28	Enchant an Item	98-100	Vision
<b>Fifth-level spells</b>					
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>					
01-03	Advanced Illusion	31-33	Extension III	01-04	Antipathy-Sympathy
04-05	Airy Water	34-35	Eyebite	05-09	Bigby's Clenched Fist
06-08	<i>Animal Growth</i>	36-38	Geas	10-14	Binding
09-10	Animate Dead	39-40	Glassee	15-18	Clone
11-12	<i>Avoidance</i>	41-42	Globe of Invulnerability	19-21	Demand
13-15	Bigby's Interposing Hand	43-44	Guards and Wards	22-25	Glassteel
16-19	Chaos	45-46	Invisible Stalker	26-29	Incendiary Cloud
20-21	Cloudkill	47-49	Legend Lore	30-31	Mass Charm
22-23	Cone of Cold	50-51	Lower Water	32-36	Maze
24-25	Conjure Elemental	52-54	Mass Suggestion	37	Mind Blank
26-28	Contact Other Plane	55-58	Mirage Arcana	38-43	Monster Summoning VI
29-30	Demi-Shadow Monsters	59-60	Mislead	44-48	Otiluke's Telekinetic Sphere
31-33	Dismissal	61-63	Monster Summoning IV	49-53	Otto's Irresistible Dance
34-35	Distance Distortion	64-65	Mordenkainen's Lucubration	54-58	Permanency
36-38	Domination	66-68	Move Earth	59-61	Polymorph Any Object
39-40	<i>Dream</i>	69-71	Otiluke's Freezing Sphere	62-66	Power Word, Blind
41-42	Extension II	72-74	Part Water	67-68	Prismatic Wall
43-44	Fabricate	75-76	Permanent Illusion	69-73	Screen
45-46	False Vision	77-79	Programmed Illusion	74-79	Serten's Spell Immunity
47-49	Feeblemind	80-81	Project Image	80-83	Sink
50-51	Hold Monster	82-83	Reincarnation	84-88	Symbol
52-54	Leomund's Lamentable	84-85	Repulsion	89-93	Trap the Soul
55-58	Belaborment	86-88	Shades	94-100	Roll again
59-60	Leomund's Secret Chest	89-91	<i>Stone to Flesh</i>		
61-63	Magic Jar	92-94	Tenser's Transformation		
64-65	Major Creation	95-96	<i>Transmute Water to Dust</i>		
66-68	Monster Summoning III	97-98	True Seeing		
69-71	Mordenkainen's Faithful Hound	99-100	Veil		
<b>Seventh-level spells</b>					
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>					
01-04	Banishment	01-04	Astral Spell		
05-09	Bigby's Grasping Hand	05-09	Bigby's Crushing Hand		
10-14	Charm Plants	10-14	Crystalbrittle		
15-18	Control Undead	15-18	Energy Drain		
19-21	Delayed Blast Fireball	19-21	Foresight		
22-25	Drawmij's Instant Summons	22-25	Gate		
26-29	Duo-Dimension	26-29	Imprisonment		
30-31	Finger of Death	30-31	Meteor Swarm		
32-36	Forcecage	32-36	Monster Summoning VII		
37	Limited Wish	37	Mordenkainen's Disjunction		
38-43	Mass Invisibility	49-53	Power Word, Kill		
44-48	Monster Summoning V	59-61	Prismatic Sphere		
49-53	Mordenkainen's Magnificent	62-66	Shape Change		
54-58	Mansion	67-68	succor		
59-61	Phase Door	69-73	<i>Temporal Stasis</i>		
62-66	Power Word, Stun	74-79	Time Stop		
67-68	Prismatic Spray	80-83	Weird		
69-73	Reverse Gravity	84-88	Wish		
74-79	Sequester	89-93	Roll again		
74-79	Shadow Walk	94-100			
<b>Sixth-level spells</b>					
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>					
01-03	Anti-Magic Shell	01-04			
04-05	Bigby's Forceful Hand	05-09			
06-08	Chain Lightning	10-14			
09-10	Conjure Animals	15-18			
11-12	Contingency	19-21			
		22-25			
		26-29			
		30-31			
		32-36			
		37			
		38-43			
		44-48			
		49-53			
		54-58			
		59-61			
		62-66			
		67-68			
		69-73			
		74-79			
		80-83			
		84-88			
		89-93			
		94-100			
<b>Eighth-level spells</b>					
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>					
01-04	Antipathy-Sympathy	01-04			
05-09	Bigby's Clenched Fist	05-09			
10-14	Binding	10-14			
15-18	Clone	15-18			
19-21	Demand	19-21			
22-25	Glassteel	22-25			
26-29	Incendiary Cloud	26-29			
30-31	Mass Charm	30-31			
32-36	Maze	32-36			
37	Mind Blank	37			
38-43	Monster Summoning VI	38-43			
44-48	Otiluke's Telekinetic Sphere	44-48			
49-53	Otto's Irresistible Dance	49-53			
54-58	Permanency	54-58			
59-61	Polymorph Any Object	59-61			
62-66	Power Word, Blind	62-66			
67-68	Prismatic Wall	67-68			
69-73	Screen	69-73			
74-79	Serten's Spell Immunity	74-79			
80-83	Sink	80-83			
84-88	Symbol	84-88			
89-93	Trap the Soul	89-93			
94-100	Roll again	94-100			
<b>Ninth-level spells</b>					
<b>1d100 roll Spell acquired</b>					
01-04	Astral Spell	01-04			
05-09	Bigby's Crushing Hand	05-09			
10-14	Crystalbrittle	10-14			
15-18	Energy Drain	15-18			
19-21	Foresight	19-21			
22-25	Gate	22-25			
26-29	Imprisonment	26-29			
30-31	Meteor Swarm	30-31			
32-36	Monster Summoning VII	32-36			
37	Mordenkainen's Disjunction	37			
49-53	Power Word, Kill	49-53			
59-61	Prismatic Sphere	59-61			
62-66	Shape Change	62-66			
67-68	succor	67-68			
69-73	<i>Temporal Stasis</i>	69-73			
74-79	Time Stop	74-79			
80-83	Weird	80-83			
84-88	Wish	84-88			
89-93	Roll again	89-93			

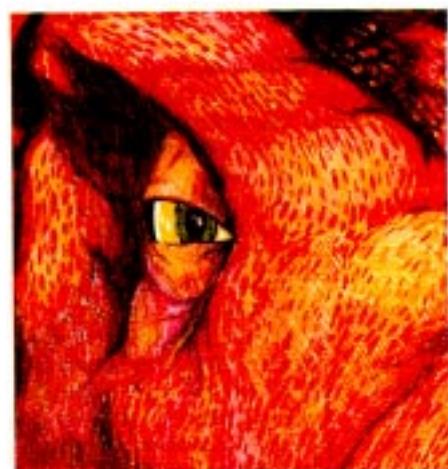
schools and spheres as outlined in the dragon sage kit description.

Additionally, this proficiency gives the sage bonuses to all lore checks, as described in the kit benefits above.

This proficiency reflects a sage's familiarity with scholarly research methods and tools, as well as his ability to use specific forms of wizard and priest magic—namely, those most helpful to gathering facts and information.

### Random spell generator for dragon PCs

Except for the rare dragon mage, priest, and sage characters, dragons acquire spells in a random, haphazard fashion. In the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set, the number of these innate spells that each dragon type receives at each age category is determined by its available number of spell slots. When a new slot opens, the DM should roll on the appropriate table below to determine which spell the dragon receives to fill the slot.



# RUMBLINGS

## News of people and events in the gaming industry

You can send us news, press releases, and announcements using the Internet at [TSR.mags@genie.geis.com](mailto:TSR.mags@genie.geis.com). We welcome your comments at Rumbplings, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

### Lead story: BATTLETECH\* CD-ROM

The first CD-ROM for an established game world is FASA's *Battletech Compendium: The Rules of Warfare*, designed by PD&C. The *Compendium* includes the Technical Readouts for 3025, 3050, and 3055 in a hypertext format supported with full-color graphics throughout. It also includes a 'Mech construction and record sheet generation program, and animation of 'Mechs in action.

The animation draws footage both from the TV series that debuts this fall and from Quick-Time versions of the BATTLETECH simulators from the Virtual World Centers. The CD-ROM also contains a Quick-Time video tour of one of the Virtual World Centers: Centers are operating currently in Chicago, San Diego, San Francisco, three sites in Japan, with locations in Dallas and Boston to open soon.

The *Battletech Compendium* will cost less than \$40 and is for use with Windows 3.1 or 4.0 only. A Macintosh conversion should be available by the end of the year.

### Cook, et al drawn to Magnet

Zeb Cook-designer of the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, the *Oriental Adventures* book, the AMAZING ENGINE® game system, the PLANESCAPE™ setting, and many other TSR classics—has left TSR to join Magnet Interactive Systems, an electronic multimedia firm. We wish him all the best.

Lawrence Schick also has joined Magnet. Schick has a long history in both paper and electronic gaming; he designed many games and modules for TSR in the 1980s and wrote *Heroic Worlds*, a guidebook to the hobby. His last project for MicroProse's computer role-playing division was the critically-acclaimed *Bloodnet*, a cyberpunk

gothic with strong role-playing elements. He now works for Magnet Interactive Studios as a producer and a title designer.

Other gaming veterans who will join Cook and Schick are Ken Rolston, ace freelance designer and former columnist for DRAGON Magazine, and Paul Murphy, known for his work on GW's SPACE HULK\* and West End Games' PARANOIA\* games.

### Off the Wire: End of an era

Year's end will mark the close of SSI and TSR's six-year collaboration on computer role-playing games, a partnership that produced both the classic Gold Box series and the *Eye of the Beholder* series. The final joint project featuring these two companies should be monstrous: the *Menzoberranzan* computer game is due in stores by the end of the year. SSI will continue to produce adventure games and war games, and SSI President Joel Billings says his developers are "anxious to begin some ambitious new projects."

In other computer gaming news, Interplay has reached an agreement with Steve Jackson Games to develop and produce computer games for SJG's GURPS\* system. Though Steve Jackson Games has produced paper games about computer games (*Hacker* and *Hacker the Dark Side*), has won court battles over electronic property rights with the Secret Service, and has a strong on-line presence, this is their first foray into electronic games. The first release will ship in 1995.

### The electric wizards

Wizards of the Coast are wired with a vengeance. According to Ken McGlothlen, the WotC on-line presence includes representatives on America Online, CompuServe, and the Illuminati Online services. You can reach them via e-mail at [questions@wizards.com](mailto:questions@wizards.com).

The rec.games.deckmaster newsgroup on the Usenet discusses all card games.

It's also possible to reach the cardmasters of Europe: Wizards of the Coast Lim-

ited has been formed in Glasgow, Scotland. We wish WotC the best in this new venture.

### Net surfing

The realms of the AD&D game are discussed in many newsgroups throughout the Internet. It is also discussed in a number of mailing lists. These include:

[adnd-l@utarlvm1.uta.edu](mailto:adnd-l@utarlvm1.uta.edu) for the AD&D game.

[realms@ossi.com](mailto:realms@ossi.com) for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® world list.

[raven@drycas.club.cc.cmu.edu](mailto:raven@drycas.club.cc.cmu.edu) for the RAVENLOFT® setting list.

[spj-l@cornell.edu](mailto:spj-l@cornell.edu) for the SPELLJAMMER® campaign list.

[planescape@le.ac.uk](mailto:planescape@le.ac.uk) for the PLANESCAPE setting and general planar discussions.

[dark-sun@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:dark-sun@leicester.ac.uk) for the DARK SUN® world list. You can subscribe by emailing to listserv at the addresses above and writing "SUB list name your name" in the body of the message.

### Appearances

Margaret Weis will be signing her books Saturday, July 16th, from 6-8 P.M. at the Waldenbooks in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Expect a mob of DRAGONLANCE® Saga and Deathgate fans, as well as spillover from the massive DragonCon game convention in Atlanta.

Jeff Grubb will be signing the latest DRAGONLANCE Villains novel, *Lord Toede* at the Northridge Waldenbooks in Milwaukee, Wis., from 12-2 P.M. on Sunday, July 31st, and at the Brookfield Waldenbooks from 3-5 P.M. that same day. He'll be at the Waukegan, Ill., Waldenbooks on Saturday, Aug. 6 from 12-2 P.M., and at The Stars our Destination store in Chicago from 1-3 P.M. on Saturday, August 13. Rumor has it that Jeff Grubb is collaborating with Kate Novak on a sequel to the popular *Azure Bonds* trilogy.

Ω

\* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.

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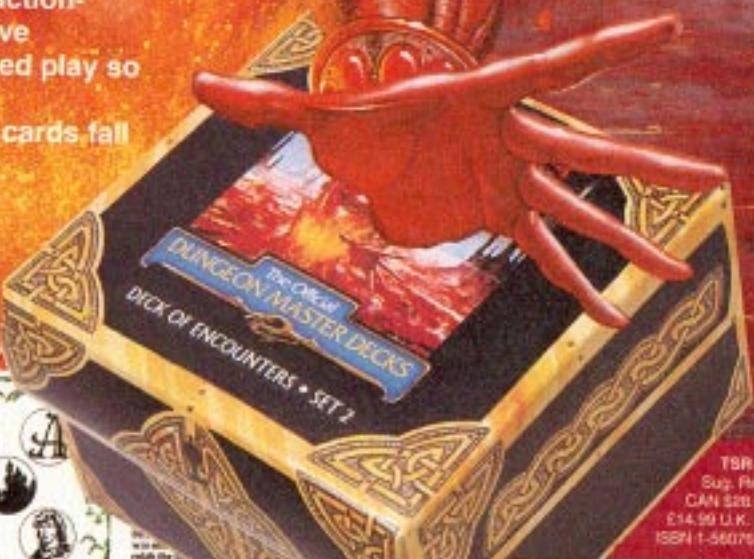
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# "There's a Rum 'Oll about, Old Chap!"

Adventure ideas for the AMAZING ENGINE® system's  
*For Faerie, Queen, and Country* setting

by Spike Y. Jones

Artwork by Newton Ewell after Gustav Dore

The greatest strength of the *For Faerie, Queen & Country* (PQC) setting for the AMAZING ENGINE® game is that it is different from every other role-playing game on the market. Unfortunately, this strength is also its greatest weakness; since a game master (GM) attempting to start up an FQC campaign will never have played anything quite like this game before, and since there were only a few

adventure ideas included in the Universe Book, she might have trouble coming up with adventure ideas.

Here is a short collection of adventure seeds that can lead to either a small event in a GM's ongoing campaign, or to a full-blown multi-session adventure. Some of the ideas are developments of themes in the FQC Universe Book, while others are based on actual historical events of the

1870s, but all take advantage of the similarities and differences between the Victorian England of our world, and of the FQC universe.

#### **The (fictional) French threat**

Following on the success of *A Journey To The Center Of The Earth*, *From The Earth To The Moon* and other imaginative works, 1870 saw the release of *Twenty*

*Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*, arguably 42-year-old Jules Verne's greatest work of science fiction. At least, it's supposed to be science fiction.

In this adventure, an official at the British Foreign Office contacts the player characters (PCs) to hire them for a bit of espionage. While everyone else seems to believe that Verne's novels are just scientific fantasies, this official has a suspicion that they actually represent something more; some rumor that Verne has heard about a French secret-weapons program. And, as the British Empire is founded on its navy, an underwater ship like the *Nutilus* could give France the upper hand in her centuries-long struggle with Britain (and *From The Earth To The Moon*'s rocketship would present similar problems).

The FQC book states that Verne's novels are just what they appear to be, but the PCs don't know that, and if the GM decides it would be more interesting, maybe the book is wrong on this point.

## Bones & stones

In 1859, Charles Darwin published the controversial *On The Origin Of Species*, but it wasn't until 1871 that he finally published *The Descent Of Man* in which he explicitly applied the theory of evolution to the origins of humanity.

In our world, there were a variety of reasons behind the 12-year delay between these books, but in the FQC world it was the question of fairies that held up publication. Did fairies evolve alongside humans? Was there a fossil record of fairy existence prior to the historical era? And if not, could this fact be used to disprove evolution?

In this adventure, sometime during this intervening decade a PC with an appropriate background (such as a gentleman scholar, a rural cleric, or a history-minded sorcerer) hears rumors of a remarkable fossil find in northern Ireland; fossils of an extinct fairy creature that appears to be the ancestor of a number of modern fairy races. At the same time, he hears of a plot by unscrupulous anti-evolutionists (possibly backed by the Unseelie Court, or even by prominent members of the Church), to destroy these finds, and anyone who attempts to communicate them to Darwin.



## The new gunpowder plot

Having defeated Denmark, Austria, and France in wars during the past decade, by late 1870 the Northern German Federation (led by Prussia under Otto von Bismarck, "The Iron Chancellor") has become the dominant land power in Europe. Strangely, Britain's Parliament and the Foreign Secretary don't seem to take this growing German threat seriously, citing the fact that Prussia has thus far only come into conflict with Britain's enemies, and being aware of the Queen's blood ties to various German states. And now, in January 1871, Bismarck intends to unite all the remaining German states as a German Empire under Prussia's Kaiser Wilhelm I, solidifying a power bloc fractured since the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire.

While the government might not be able to act against this imminent danger, certain far-sighted private citizens plan to take matters into their own hands, for the good of the Empire; they plan to assassinate King Wilhelm before he can be declared Emperor, hopefully eliminating Bismarck in the bargain.

The PCs can find themselves on either side of this plot. If they are in the employ

of the government (e.g., civil servants, especially in the Foreign Office), they would be expected to prevent this thoroughly uncivilized enterprise, for the sake of Britain's reputation (and, incidentally, to prevent a major war). But if they truly care about the Empire's future (especially if the players have presentiments of World War I in mind), maybe joining the plot is the correct course of action.

## Six of one . . .

It has never been said that Parliament was a rational body, but lately its deliberations had taken a stranger turn than normal. A growing number of Members are voting against their parties, failing to turn up for votes on their own private members bills, forcing lengthy debates on minor procedural rules while ignoring obvious mistakes made by their opponents instead of pouncing on them with partisan zeal. If such strange behavior continues, it may become necessary for the Queen to dissolve Parliament and call an election to replace these "loose cannons."

Before such measures are required though, an outside investigation of these quirky politicians is called for. It is, of course, the player characters who are quietly approached by a civil servant within the Prime Minister's staff, and asked to perform this discreet (since no one wants a scandal) inquiry.

The strangely behaving Parliament members are actually all shapechanged fairies (mostly bogeys, but with a smattering of other fairy types) in the midst of losing a bet made to a mysterious stranger who wagered that a fairy could never handle the difficult tasks of running a "real" government. Feeling the honor of all fairy-kind to be at stake (and always willing to partake of mischief), these troublemakers took up the challenge, kidnapping a number of members and taking their places in the House of Commons only to discover that trying to keep up a complicated disguise day after day in front of an audience of hundreds is more difficult than it would seem.

This adventure would center on the PCs' detective skills, and would not necessarily have to lead to armed conflict. Various clues can be presented to the PCs: all the



affected members are single men from outlying districts (the fairies thus won't have to fool the families of the real humans when outside of the House); while the suspect members include both Liberals and Conservatives, they seem to be able to get together on votes that affect the rights of fairies in the United Kingdom; and the fact that these "men" have formed a loose clique among themselves, one which sometimes even crosses party affiliations.

Even if the PCs uncover the plot, they can't simply announce their discovery and consider themselves successful; the crisis of non-confidence that would engender would be far worse than the nuisance of having a few members of Parliament voting strangely. (After all, how much does that differ from the normal workings of Parliament?) The PCs will have to find the missing members and return them to their seats without being discovered in order to be truly successful. Then comes the task of tracking down the mysterious anarchist who hatched this whole plot in the first place.

### High and mighty

Speaking of Parliament, there is the question of the Tuatha members in the House of Commons. These five fairy representatives are not a major voting bloc as far as British politics go (holding less than 1% of the 652 seats in the Commons), and even as part of the Irish bloc of votes (totaling 105 including the Tuatha), they are at least predictable. Despite their minor role in Parliament, they have become a major source of controversy, among both humans and fairies.

Isn't the fact that these Tuatha (who were denied their seats in Parliament until 1858 when the words "as a Christian" were stricken from the oath of loyalty to the Queen required of members of Parliament) represent a pagan people a threat to the Church of Albion, and thus to the Empire? Could they be separatists? Anarchists? Terrorists? For that matter, isn't it strange that a Tuathan, described as "a noble ruler of the fairies," would be voluntarily sitting among elected human representatives in the House of Commons, instead of loudly demanding a place among his equals in the House of Lords?



What kind of "noble ruler" would do that? What ulterior motives would he have to have to debase himself in this way? Maybe they're just playing at the game of politics, and a little bit of intimidation would serve to scare them back where they belong.

When the Tuathan members all begin receiving anonymous death threats, the difficulty facing the PCs won't be in finding suspects and pinning down their motives. The problem will be to sort through the long list of enemies these members have accumulated (xenophobic humans wanting to get fairies out of "human" political affairs, members of the Unseelie Court hoping to start a war between their Seelie cousins and humanity, radical Old Church supporters upset about the fact that pagans can vote on laws that will be binding on good Christians, and even other members of the Tuatha who feel degraded by the "common" status of these, their representatives in Parliament) and find the actual culprits before it is too late.

### Blood will tell

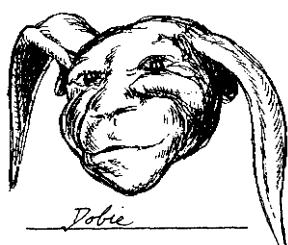
Nowadays, when we talk of something being "in the blood" we actually mean that it's information contained in a person's chromosomes, but in Victorian England,

"in the blood" was a literal statement of where inherited characteristics might be located. Coincidentally, the 19th century was a time of medical experiments, one of which was research into blood transfusion (including transfusions of salt water, and animal blood as well as human blood).

This adventure isn't one which the GM should set up in advance. Instead, if a PC finds herself grievously injured and in need of extreme medical assistance, instead of having a solicitous NPC mage cast a difficult healing spell on her, introduce a doctor who performs transfusions, and have him explain that this is the only chance the PC will have to survive. Then arrange matters so that the only able-bodied blood donor on the scene is a character (NPC or PC) with a good quantity of faerie blood in his veins, preferably a Blooded or Full fairy, although even blood from a Marked character would have its effect.

In a few days' time (and for a period of a couple of weeks as the PC's body gradually replaces the fairy blood with new human blood), the character will recover, to discover that some of the fairy powers of the donor have been transmitted along with his blood. If the donor was only Marked, this will result in the recipient being effectively Tainted with fairy blood (although there won't be time for the outward appearance of the character to be changed), and thus receiving a +5% bonus resisting glamours, but a one-point vulnerability to *cold iron*. If the donor was Blooded, then the recipient will be effectively Marked (+10% vs. glamours, -2 points from *cold iron*).

If the donor was a Full fairy (the best situation for the GM to arrange, if at all possible), the recipient will find herself receiving the benefits of being Blooded: +10% vs. glamours, -2 points from *cold iron*, and the ability to use one fairy glamour (the same as that used by the donor) making skill rolls against the average of the donor's and the recipient's Psyche scores. In addition, the character's appearance will slowly change to match the appropriate fairy type, although the transformation won't be complete before it reverses itself with the increasing dilution of the fairy blood, resulting in a reaction-



roll penalty of -5% for a period of a few days at the height of the transformation.

What happens to the "temporary fairy" character during these few weeks is a matter for the GM and the player to decide. While it would be easiest to just run adventures as normal, letting the player enjoy the use of his PC's new powers with no lasting effects, it would be more realistic and interesting to delve into the consequences of such a strange turn of events. This is an opportunity for a fully human PC to experience some of the problems a fairy must struggle with in human-dominated areas such as central London; the pain suffered upon entering hallowed ground, the discomfort even the sight of a cross presents, the distrust the upper class has for fairies, and the fear of the lower classes.

If the players try to abuse this opportunity by volunteering for unneeded transfusions in order to gain fairy powers, there is one downside to Victorian blood transfusions to consider: death. While the methods and machinery of transfusion were well developed, unfortunately, the matter of blood types wasn't discovered until 1900, and as more patients died from blood incompatibility the transfusion practice died out as well, virtually disappearing for a quarter of a century shortly after the FQC campaign year. If a player requests an unnecessary transfusion just to "cheat the system," you can warn him about the dangers and then, if he insists on proceeding, let him have his wish . . . and let his PC die from a failed transfusion. Maybe he'll be less greedy with his next character.

## To live anew

The mental image most of us have of Queen Victoria as a dour, withdrawn grandmother in black dresses saying "We are not amused" dates to the latter half of her reign: the period after the death of her husband, Albert, the Prince-Consort, in 1861. Before that time, Victoria was a much less stern figure, and much more involved in the governing of her country and the Empire.

If someone wanted to gain a voice in the ruling of Great Britain, one possible avenue of power would be to gain influence over Victoria. And, to the minds of The Esteemed Order of Thaumaturgists (a cabal of sorcerers dedicated to the overthrow of the Queen's rule), an ideal method to gain this influence would be to promise the return of Victoria's beloved Albert. If the plot succeeded, the cabal could play Victoria as their puppet, and if it fails, the scandal surrounding the ploy would serve to discredit the highly public Queen more than the secretive magical society.

In a world without working magic, the thaumaturgists' plot probably consists of arranging for some sort of faked table-tapping seance in which Albert would apparently "speak" to Victoria, suggesting

that she grant favors to unrecognized members of the Order. But in a world where such seances could occur with little trouble through the use of various summoning magics, something more would be required to have an impact: the actual (or apparent) resurrection of the Prince-Consort.

There are two possible moments when the characters can get involved in this plot. In its early stages, the PCs could investigate what appears to be a "normal" grave-robbing case (the Order digging up bodies to test their new combination of Animate, Delude, Summon, and Bind spells on); expecting to find some mad dissectionist, they could stumble over the plans to dig up Albert's body next. Or, if they are relatively close to the Queen, they may notice a strange change in her behavior: a lightness in her heart that's combined with numerous trips to a part of London she would never have frequented before (the site where the "raised" Albert is being kept). In either case, the PCs will have to foil the plot, remembering to take care that Queen Victoria's sensibilities are not offended (such as by killing Albert before her eyes).

## If the magic had never been

Finally, what about confronting the differences between the real world and the FQC setting directly? In this adventure, the PCs meet a stranger from a not-so-strange place: a man who claims to be from a world similar to that of the player characters, except that, in his world, there are no real fairies or working magic, and various fine details of history (like the failure of the American try at independence from the Empire) are different.

There are a number of possibilities for exactly who gets transported to the PCs' world, including an average person from our Victorian England, a historical personage from some other part of the real world such as an ex-Confederate Army officer, or a British officer from the South African or Indian colonies that were much more prosperous in our world than in the FQC world, the exact duplicate of one of the PCs who just happens to be from the real world, or even (clichéd though it is) a modern American who happens to bear a striking resemblance to one of the *players*. The PCs don't have to accept his story at face value; they could assume that he is a publicist promoting a new science fantasy like those of Jules Verne, he's been magically compelled to concoct a cock-and-bull story, he's a spy from some foreign court trying to wend his way into someone's confidence, or that he's simply a cunning lunatic (especially if he claims to be from another time as well as place).

While the PCs could meet this stranger at some place they frequent (such as a local pub), or on the streets after he causes some commotion, it could be interesting to have his appearance be directly tied to some action of the player charac-

ters. If, for instance, the stranger's arrival coincided with an attempt by one of the PCs to cast a Create, Summon, or Transport spell that resulted in an automatic failure roll, the stranger could magically appear at the focus of the intended spell effects, leaving the PCs to assume (rightly or wrongly) that it was their magicks that brought him to the England of the FQC setting, and forcing them to take responsibility for effecting his safe return.

Ω



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# Superheroes taking an active role

by Alexander Teitz

Artwork by Paul Daly

The role of the superhero always has been to protect the community from menaces, both super-powered and normal. In most cases, this is accomplished by having an individual hero or a team run patrols around a city. This way they can respond to emergencies quickly and directly. Although this method allows heroes to be the first ones on the scene, there is another way for heroes to take action—have the hero PCs take an active role in the community.

Many superhero RPGs give experience points for heroic PCs who participate in events besides stopping crimes such as doing acts of charity. These acts include everything from donating money to making personal appearances. Unfortunately, most heroes don't go out of their way to earn this type of experience. Instead a hero will go through her job, life, and superheroic patrols and hope that something will occur. In real life, some professions and some lifestyles have access to the dangers of society; most do not. In real life, a person can volunteer her time and become involved with society. Why should this be different with a hero? If anything, a hero can offer more than an average citizen. What normal citizen can support a brick wall, or give first aid at super-speed? This article presents six different categories of activities that heroes can volunteer for, and the real-life organizations that are involved in them. This article concludes with Pandora's Box, a National Superhero Organization that survives by community participation. Please note that the inclusion of real-world problems and issues in this article by no means is meant to trivialize these important concerns. This article merely attempts to add to the role-playing possibilities of a four-color superhero campaign by incorporating modern-day issues.

There are six categories a hero can volunteer for: Health, Crime, Law, Environment, Disasters, and Miscellaneous.

## Health

Within this category, there are a number of subsections including helping the elderly, assisting those with physical and mental disabilities, helping those recovering from addiction, and participating in research groups. Some ways to help the

elderly include driving them to and from the doctor, grocery store, relatives, etc., or delivering medicines or groceries to them as needed. Many local organizations of this type exist across the country. An adventure could occur when a hero PC is delivering Mrs. Bagley to the hospital for an examination, and discovers that the pharmacy has been robbed, all medicines taken, and all the pharmacy's employees are unconscious.

The next section in Health is assisting those physical and mental disabilities. Ways to assist include reading for the blind, volunteering to help those with depression (a psychology talent or skill is a must), and helping build walkways and ramps for businesses to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Heroes with medical training or healing powers could find careers in curing some individuals. Organizations include the United Cerebral Palsy Association, Recording for The Blind, and the American Psychological Association. An adventure could begin when the PCs are working with a building group (to weld metal railings for ramps) when a villain mentally controls the building group to fire the PCs and cancel the project's funding for no apparent reason.

There are many possibilities for heroes to help fight addiction. How do you help a teenager stay off drugs, or a businessman not drink? Again, heroes with healing powers could provide assistance. Organizations include Al-Anon, Alcoholics Anonymous, and DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). An adventure could begin when a villain starts selling an illegal drug that makes people more susceptible to his mind control, and the heroes hear about it through a child at a DARE program.

The final Health section is participating in disease-research organizations. If a hero is a scientist or engineer, he could be vital in researching new theories and building new equipment to combat illness. Research organizations include the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the American Cancer Society, and National Institutes of Health AIDS research. Campaigns could start with a hero character making public appearances for the American Cancer Society when his grandfather contracts lung cancer.

## Crime

Crime includes not only pursuing and apprehending villains, but also areas such as domestic violence, corrections, and victims' assistance. Fighting crime today is more than beating up the bad guy, and requires a caring hero to deal with the complex issues that arise.

The crime of child neglect has many organizations determined to put an end to this outrage. Organizations include Big National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Heroes can help by becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister or by helping kids heal from child abuse both mentally and physically. The campaign's PCs could be involved when one hero becomes a foster parent and the biological parent decides to hire a super-powered thug to gain illegal custody of the child.

A hero may have to deal with criminals she brought to justice in the corrections system. A hero might volunteer to work at the local Halfway House, or teach classes in prison. Organizations include the local jails and prisons. An adventure might begin when a PC is teaching math at a super-powered prison and a riot breaks out in another part of the prison.

The last section is victims' assistance. Victims' assistance makes it possible for the hero to see the results of a supervillain's evil up close. Many people feel powerless in the face of crime, and it could be the hero's job to make a person feel like he has control again. PCs with mental powers could read the villain's mind to help recover victims' stolen goods, etc. Telepaths may serve as "juries" to determine accused parties' innocence or guilt.

## Law

A category related to Crime is Law. Law includes civil rights, consumer groups, housing, and labor unions. Law is where heroes with Legal or Law Enforcement talents are most useful.

The biggest section of Law is civil rights. Ways to help include having a lawyer hero volunteer his time to try a case or do research on one. Organizations include the NAACP, Indian Rights Association, National Gay Task Force, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). An adventure could begin when a lawyer hero is called

into court by the ACLU to help (as a lawyer) in the defense of a recently defeated supervillain because the villain's civil rights were violated by the same hero at some point during the villain's capture.

The next section is consumer groups. Some ways a hero could participate include getting people to register to vote, or investigating a sleazy telemarketing business. Organizations include political parties, The League of Women Voters of the United States, and the Better Business Bureau. An adventure might arise when the heroic PCs' are portrayed in the media as violent people with no regard for civil rights, and any cause (charity, etc.) the heroes support suffers backlash.

Law also includes housing. Housing might mean making sure a housing unit is safe to live in or investigating alleged discrimination against minorities seeking housing. Organizations include the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing. A campaign could begin when the landlord of one of the PC's relatives refuses to take care of pest control, dangerous wiring, unsafe or dark stairwells, etc., and the PC's relative is injured due to the landlords negligence.

The last section of Law is labor unions. Labor unions include the United Auto Workers (UAW), the AFL-CIO, and teachers' unions. The biggest way for heroes to help is to arbitrate between a union and the company its members work for, but a hero also could be called in to stop violence during a strike. A campaign could begin when the hero team is asked to help arbitrate a labor strike and one of the factions hires supervillains to interfere with the negotiations.

## Environment

The fourth category is the Environment. The Environment includes stopping illegal waste dumping, promoting recycling programs, or protesting illegal deforestation. Organizations include Greenpeace, The World Wildlife Fund, The National Geographic Society, and state Public Information Research Groups (PIRGs). A campaign could be built when a super villain team is created from an accident at the local power plant because the plant managers refused to repair environmental hazards.

## Disasters

Disasters range from a simple power outage, to an earthquake or a hurricane. Ways to help include restoring power, rebuilding homes, and providing temporary law enforcement for an area. One organization that heroes could work with is the American Red Cross. Numerous adventures (stopping looting, flooding, car accidents, etc.) could result from an earthquake in the campaign's home city, and could take months to return the city to normal.

## Miscellaneous

The last category is a mixture of all those other organizations that went unnamed above. These include the Veterans' Administration, Amnesty International, the United Way, etc. In addition, heroes can volunteer for local libraries, historical foundations, and museums. Ways to help can be a mixture from ways mentioned above to helping diagnose a new disease genetically engineered by a supervillain.

Besides dealing with problems nationally, heroes also can have an effect on the international scene. The area where heroes can best be used is international relief. On a local level, heroes can collect food and supplies to be sent to a country that is suffering from shortages due to war, drought, famine, etc. If a hero is involved in the International Red Cross, the Red Crescent, CARE, UNICEF, or a multitude of branches of the United Nations she could be sent to a country to help distribute aid, as well as protect those

administering it. Heroes assigned to these missions would be at more risk than those working with programs at home. Heroes could be attacked by super-powered people in the country's government who resent foreign "interference." They also could be attacked by various political or military factions. Being an international hero gets the character (and the player) involved directly with the situation, and all the participants in it. An adventure could be created when the U.N. sends the PCs to a war-ravaged area to help distribute food and they are attacked by supervillains hired by one of the military factions or by the military itself.

## Pandora's Box

Now that you know some of the ways heroes can help in the community and the world, meet Pandora's Box, a National hero Organization whose sole purpose is to help the community before a disastrous event can occur.

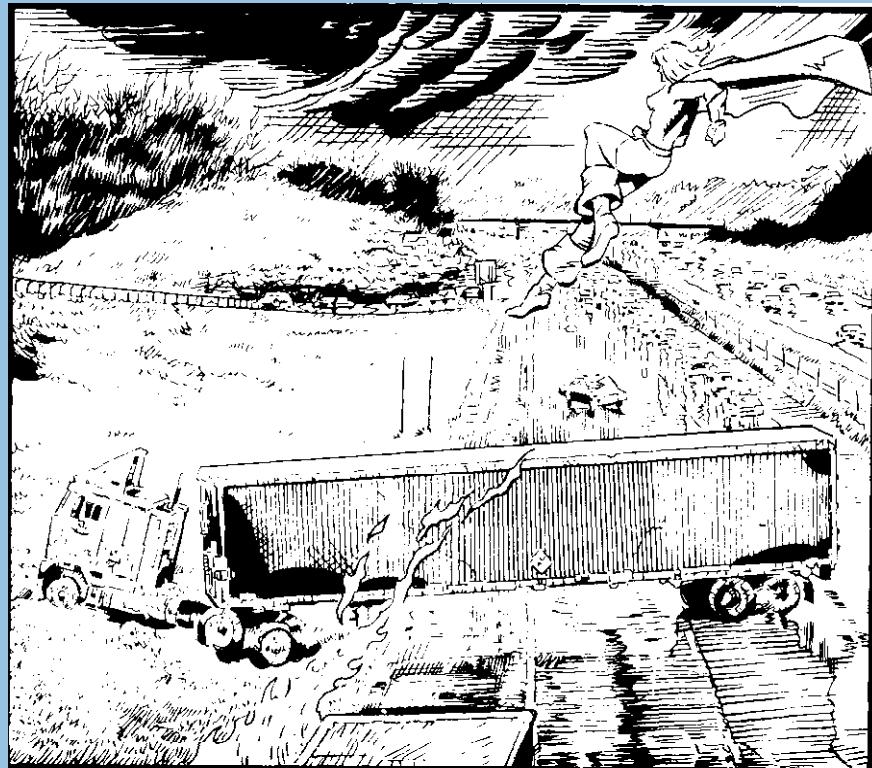


Pandora's Box is the name of a nationwide hero franchise specializing in training hero teams to help the community. Pandora's Box is designed to be a safe haven for heroes (especially persecuted mutants) who work directly with community and police leaders. "Afterthought," the Director of Pandora's Box and a mutant (with precognition and mutant-detection powers), convinced a number of small businesses that funding a hero group would be in their interest. Fifteen businesses agreed and funded the current headquarters (including a danger room) and vehicles (vans) of the first Pandora's Box team. In return for their funding, the heroes agreed to take a direct role in the communities where the businesses operate. They would work with police, social services, public works, etc., to see that the communities were improved. Within a year, the six-member Pandora's Box team, had reduced crime by over 40% and been instrumental in building and maintaining a public recreation house and the park around it.

This dramatic success made Pandora's Box a national phenomenon. Multi-national businesses nationwide asked how they could become involved, and heroes in other states asked how they could begin. "Afterthought" responded by setting up criteria for how a franchise group could be created. Her criteria are as follows:

1. All members of a Pandora's Box team must be from the area of the businesses supporting them.

2. No more than one large business can invest in a Pandora's Box team, but an unlimited number of community businesses can invest.



3. Any profits generated by Pandora's Box immediately go to a fund in the community's name.

4. All Pandora's Box members are responsible to their respective communities. If they use their status in Pandora's Box for personal gain, or against the best wishes of the community, they will be thrown out of the franchise.

To date, Pandora's Box has six teams nationwide: one in Albany, N.Y., one in Newark, N.J., two in New York City, one in Los Angeles, and one in Dallas. Cities that have expressed interest in teams are Miami, Boston, Milwaukee, and Denver. Pandora's Box is funded entirely by community businesses and large business grants. In its seven years of existence, Pandora's Box has trained well over 120 heroes. The original team now acts as recruiters, promoters, and trainers for all the teams. In return for having access to the best equipment and technology for transportation and training, Pandora's Box spends 98% of its time helping the community. All trainee members are required to work in homeless shelters, detox centers, and hospitals for their first nine months as members of Pandora's Box. In return they are provided training free of charge and a place to stay.

During times of natural disasters, all the teams work together to ensure that normality can be returned as soon as possible. After two years, the trainees are made full members and encouraged to go to other cities and start a franchise.

## Conclusion

The role of a hero, whether super-powered or not, is to help those around him. This can't be done by taking a passive role. A heroic person must make an effort to act with the community. Not only does this bring the heroic person closer to the community and vice-versa, it also gives the heroic person a chance to gain experiences and meet people that a passive role would never allow.

I recommend the article, "Super Jobs for Super Talents: The United Nations Special Talents Agency" by Marcus L. Rowland in DRAGON® issue #160. The setting of Steve Jackson Games' GURPS SUPERS\* and SUPERS I.S.T.\* books also includes strongly proactive superheroes.

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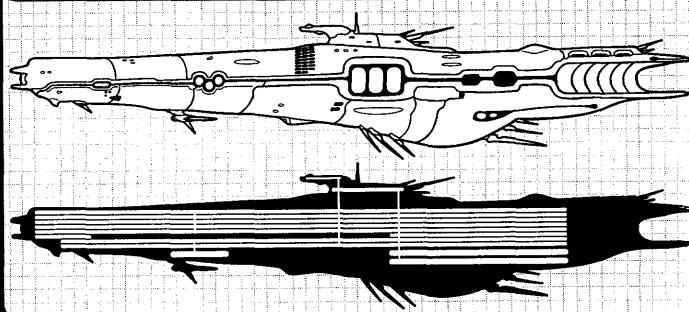
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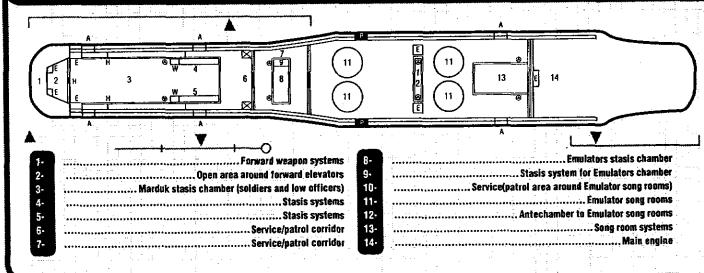
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# Supervillain

## What every supervillain needs—character

by Chris Avellone

Artwork by Paul Daly



You know who they are. They infest comic-book society at all levels like a cancer, always with some new scheme for furthering their power. Your PCs have fought them everywhere from the dark city streets to their secret bases on the moon, matched wits with their most intelligent robots, stopped their plans for world domination, and sent them off to prison.

But who are supervillains really?

Supervillains are more than code names and flashy powers. They have a heavy burden in a role-playing game: They are required to keep the plot moving, provide a focus to the adventure, and be a thorn in a superhero's side. As a result, every supervillain should be carefully designed by the Game Master (GM). The following points are offered for creating well-rounded villains for superhero campaigns.

### Campaign roles

The most important aspect in the creation of a supervillain is what role the villain will serve in the campaign. Why is the villain needed in the campaign? Will the villain be filling a slot in a group of villains? Will the villain be a long-term foe whose plans are in constant opposition to the heroes? Villains usually are built for combat, but they can threaten characters in other ways. Villains could follow the characters and videotape all their activities. The GM may construct villains who attack PCs socially by dating the hero's significant other, getting the hero fired from her job, or exploiting a hero's psychological disadvantages. Villains can attack all aspects of a hero's life—socially, emotionally, and psychologically. Villains can be placed in three different roles, detailed here.

**A physical threat:** The villain is designed to fight the hero. The level of physical threat can vary from inconveniencing a hero to being able to take on several heroes at once.

**A social threat:** The villain interferes with the hero's social life by threatening the hero's family professional, and romantic relationships. The villain can learn a character's secret identity, fall in love with the character, commit crimes that exploit a hero's psychological disadvantages, or try to ruin the character's reputation.

**A competitive threat:** The "villain" competes with the hero; even though their goals are the same, their methods are different. One example of this type of conflict could involve two professed he-

roles: one who works within the law as much as possible, avoiding such acts as breaking and entering, killing villains, etc.; the other actively disdains the law in his vigilante pursuit of "justice."

If a villain has been designed to confront a specific hero, the characteristics and the powers of the villain should be chosen carefully (see Statistics and Powers below).

### Archetypes

Several sample villain archetypes are presented here; if the GM is at a loss for a concept, one or more of the archetypes below may be used to create a villain.

**The megalomaniac:** Megalomaniacs are obsessed with power. They seek to control and dominate others, believing that they alone are destined to rule. They occasionally run afoul of other megalomaniacs, and several megalomaniacs may be waging war on each other in a campaign. These villains often have tremendous resources at their disposal.

**The deviant:** Deviants commit crimes because they enjoy it. Their activities are frequently a result of a mental disorder or psychological handicap. They take pleasure in acts that society finds abhorrent.

**The visionary:** Visionaries are trying to build a better world, but are using means to accomplish that which are contrary to the interests of society. They are usually fanatics, politicians, or religious leaders.

**The brainiac:** Brainiacs are more intelligent than the majority of the population. This makes them believe they are better equipped to govern others, especially those of lesser intelligence. Like the visionary, the brainiac may have a master plan for humanity.

**The lackey:** The lackey has a useful power or skill that another villain can employ. The lackey follows the villain out of fear, greed, stupidity, or low self-esteem. The lackey lets the master do the thinking.

**The businessman:** For businessmen, crime pays the bills. It is a business venture where money and material possessions can be secured with little effort.

**The thrill-seeker:** Thrill-seekers find life boring; committing crimes is just something to alleviate the boredom. The more danger and excitement involved, the better. These characters may be attention-mongers with no secret identities.

Again, these archetypes can be combined. Multitudes of brainiac megalomaniacs, thrill-seeking businessmen, and deviant lackeys exist in the comics and in superhero campaigns.

### Attitudes

How will the villain interact with the heroes? If the villain is intended to be a dark, malevolent force in the campaign, the villain's attitude should be serious and commanding, with every action and statement conveying menace and power. If the villain is a lackey, he may be an annoying "yes-man" who constantly praises his superiors or a stupid brute who thinks his master has his best interests at heart. Some villains are dashing and engage in battles of wit with heroes; others have a friendly rivalry with their heroic adversaries. A villain's attitude should take into account the villain's role in the campaign, the villain's goals, and the threat the villain represents to the hero. If a GM has designed a psychopathic villain to kill a member of the hero's family, the villain should have a despicable and vile attitude, with few or no redeeming qualities. If a villain is committing crimes for fun or excitement, he will be more flippant than a world conqueror. (World domination is a much more serious endeavor.) Weak, low-threat villains can be played for comic effect, while powerful, high-threat villains should have attitudes that intimidate the heroes.

### Aliases

Code names need not refer to villains' powers; they can reflect an attitude, a *modus operandi*, a preferred mode of attack, or a clever nickname. The campaign's newspapers occasionally take it upon themselves to name villains. Choosing a mysterious code name for a villain ("The Amazing Z") can have characters wondering exactly what the villain's powers and skills are. A villain's name should always be spoken aloud before using it; silly and awkward names will wear thin with use. Some villains consider code names inappropriate or ridiculous.

### Statistics

Only after the above topics have been considered should a villain's characteristics (strength, intelligence, agility, etc.) be determined. How the villain's characteristics will be used against the PCs should be taken into account when a villain is being designed. Will the villain be confronting the hero intellectually, physically, or socially? Intellectual villains do not need tremendous physical power, but can use their wits to entrap and outmaneuver heroes. The characteristics of physical-threat villains should be of a level so that the hero cannot win easily. Brainiacs are very intelligent. Megalomaniacs have high charisma, and visionaries have strong will-power. The characteristics of lackeys vary.



If the villain is going to be a member of a supervillain group, weaknesses can be covered by the villain's allies.

Before finalizing a villain's characteristics, be aware of the personalities of the players in your campaign. Some players pride themselves on their characters being the best at everything, and they cannot accept or tolerate when anyone is smarter, faster, or stronger than they are. The best thing that can be done for these players is to make the villain's characteristics equal to or slightly less than the heroes the villain will be confronting. The one exception to this rule is the hero's archfoe, her nemesis. The fact that the villain is better than the hero is just another reason to defeat his nefarious schemes.

## Powers

How tough should the villain be? Do you want the villain to be weaker than, stronger than, or equal to a particular hero or hero group? Do you want the villain to exploit a vulnerability or a weakness of the hero character? These questions should be considered when choosing a villain's powers. Villains may want to get rid of their powers, experiment with them, placate them (if the powers are sentient), or show them off.

Every villain's power should be unique. Instead of an "Energy Blast," foes might be able to accelerate protons, fire a dispersal field that disintegrates living matter, or open a gate to another dimension and let alien energy engulf targets.

The villain may have hidden powers. Villains can lie about their abilities, only to reveal them later to catch the characters off guard. Cunning villains may go to great lengths to deceive heroes. Examples of hidden powers include illusionists who pretend to fire energy beams, invisible villains who claim to be able to teleport or travel through dimensions, or "armored heroes" who use technology as a facade to disguise their mutant powers.

## Motivations

Why does a villain do the things he does? Megalomaniacs want to rule the world. Thrill-seekers are looking for excitement. Common motivations include revenge, greed, prejudice, a sense of superiority, or a plan, belief, or goal that runs contrary to society's interests. ("I know what's good for you . . . you just don't understand my grand design.") A motivation can be linked to a hero's background or personality—a villain who learned martial arts from a hero's teacher attacks the hero, determined to prove he is a master of the technique. The hero may have imprisoned one of the villain's friends, and the villain is out for revenge. By making the motivation connected to the heroes, the villain becomes more real to the character.

## Origins

How and why did the villain turn to evil?

Several possible origins follow.

**Society:** The person who will become the villain was betrayed by a loved one or a boss, fired from a job, mistreated by the judicial system, raised in a bad family, or rejected by society because of appearance or beliefs.

**Economics:** The villain is poor and needs money, or has money, but wants more. A villain with superpowers may see theft as the easiest way to "earn" money.

**Biology:** The character either is insane or physically abnormal (the villain needs to consume human blood to survive, etc.) by birth or by an accident. He is coping the best he can.

**Alien ethics:** The villain isn't evil at all. He just has a different perspective, political view, or code of honor. His actions are justified by his own beliefs.

**Servitude:** The villain is a slave. The villain is being mind-controlled or blackmailed by someone else.

## Status

What is the villain's reputation on the streets? Villains with a high status are respected and feared in the criminal community, while low-status villains may be unknowns and have a low probability of being recognized by anyone. PCs may underestimate these villains. Listed below are some factors in determining a villain's status.

**Wealth:** Money can buy respect. Drug dealers who drive around in sports cars and wear expensive clothes may have a high status in their neighborhoods. Poor characters will have a low status.

**Popularity:** Are the villain's personality and actions popular? Does he murder loyal followers (penalties to his status) or does he steal from the rich and give to the poor (bonuses to his status)?

**Charisma:** The villain's force of will, personality, and appearance can affect his status. Some villains gain status with their words, actions, and the way they interact with others. They may lie, cheat, and betray allies, but they get away with it by the force of their charisma.

**Competence:** If the villain constantly screws up the simplest heists, his status will plummet, while successful villains command more respect.

**Power level:** If a villain can level a city block with the smallest flicker of his power, his status will be higher than that of a street hood.

**Occupation:** Lackeys do not have as much status as criminal masterminds.

## Modus operandi

What kind of criminal is the villain? The villain's occupation should fit his motivations and can influence his status. Examples include: kidnapper, diplomat, burglar, arsonist, murderer, hacker, slave trader, scientist, weapons dealer, collector, terrorist, musician, bounty hunter, vigilante, prostitute, gambler, smuggler, assassin, gang lord, anarchist, specialist (who ad-

vises villains on courses of action, but does not become directly involved), pawn broker, drug dealer, actor or actress, lawyer, inventor, or mercenary.

Mercenaries and inventors serve an important function in campaigns. Mercenaries are versatile and can be hired by different villains to attack the heroes repeatedly without the GM having to design new villains for every adventure. Scientists and inventors can flood the campaign with dangerous technology and augment villains with devices that exploit characters' weaknesses.

## Background

Does the villain have a family? If so, what are his feelings about it? Some villains have no relatives, but those who do must have some relationship with them. The family may be the motivation behind a villain's criminal career; the villain may be undertaking crimes to support his impoverished family, or the family may have a "tradition" of criminal behavior that the villain is expected to uphold. The family members may be helping the character commit crimes and may even be superpowered themselves. Heroes speaking to the family of a villain may learn the villain's background and motivations.

A villain may not have been convicted of any crimes, but most have a long and distinguished career of breaking the law. The police, the FBI, the Justice Department, or Interpol may have records of the crimes a villain has committed in the past that provide clues to a villain's motivations. If the GM provides a list of a villain's crimes to the players, this strengthens the villain's background, and the list may result in spinoff adventures; if the villain has been engaging in random thefts, an intelligent hero looking at the villain's past crimes may realize that the villain is actually following a pattern (attempting to build a doomsday machine).

A villain's area of operations can be a small town, a state, a nation, or an entire planet. The villain's occupation and motivation should influence his operations: a gang leader's area of operations may be confined to a few city blocks, while the tyrant of a small country has an entire nation under his thumb. A villain's area of operations should have services to support his needs; villains who engage in petty thefts need to sell ("fence") what they steal and need a reliable bank to deposit their funds in. The area of operations also should include places the villain frequents when he is not committing crimes. A villain may eat at the same restaurant, drink at the same bar, or work out at the same gym as the PCs without either party's awareness.

## Conclusion

Every villain a GM designs is a reflection on the GM's imagination; if you break stereotypes and make your villains shine, your campaign will be better for it.



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know a good position when I see one, which doesn't explain how I ended up with Laird Rheagel of Roth Shan, he so tight with the Church and all. Indeed I was surprised that he accepted me. Not that I consider myself impious, mind you. I say the chants regularly and properly, and I wear the Sign. Actually, I am familiar with many signs, which is the problem. These young priests are so uppity. Their knowledge can't simply be best, but it must be *only* — and whoosh! a thousand years of learning dumped out the window with the bath water.

But I say a girl has to be careful, especially when she's seen as many winters as I have and is no longer often called a girl. So I try to keep on the good side of all the heavens, although some are more easily satisfied than others. I won't say I was driven out of my previous home, but when the eggs are rotten, I don't stay for the omelet, and when the local priest denounced me as a witch, I left.

Although as far as that goes, he was right. I have the herb-lore and the star-knowledge, like many a country woman, although I fancy I'm wiser than most in those ways. And there's more in me than weed-cures and old wives' tales, too, not that old wives are anything to discount. No, I'd sooner offend a priest than a wise old wife. It's the choice between risky and worse. But what I am telling you is, I have a touch of the canny.

So, Roth Shan I mentioned. It's a hard strip of land between the mountains and the sea, and hard are its people and hard is its lord. A pillar of the Church, he is, and I expected no help from him when I came in. But he said he might have a bit of washing to be done, and he offered me a decent living wage, enough to put honey in the tea. Very surprising, in that they say he's been known to geld an ant and make the meat do for a month.

Anyhow, that's the way I became washer-woman for the laird of Roth Shan. It wasn't many years later that he brought in a wife, a young lady from foreign parts. I turned out to see her ridden in, all in silk and crushed velvet, atop a high-stepping white mare. She was pretty enough, if a bit thin and nervy-looking, but it wasn't the thinness that caught me; it was the wildness in her dark eyes and the way she seemed to move through shadows never cast by earthly light. And I said to myself, *she's got it*.

When the ceremony was over and things had calmed down, and she'd taken up plain clothes and plainer duties, I contrived to come up beside her and say a few words in quiet. Everything I mentioned was double-hidden, but recognizable to anyone with fey knowledge. She treated me quite polite but seemed confused, and it was obvious she'd had no training.

So I thought it would be all right. A mistake, as it turned out, and as I freely admit. But what have I to do with high-born ladies? I did the washing. I kept to my cottage. Her ladyship grew thinner and paler, even her hair turning an ashen sort of color, but her eyes stayed dark and mad.

It was the next autumn that the laird came to my cottage. Unseasonable frosts had killed most of the late harvests, and the nights were filling with mist. It was through one such fog that he came riding, alone. I heard the hoof-

# The Lady of Roth Shan

by Jo Shannon Cochran

Illustrations by Bob Lessl

beats before the shrouded light of his lantern came into view. I watched through the window as he swung off the horse and strode to my little door. He struck it three times, hard, and I drew back the bolt and let him in.

Laird Rheagel is a craggy man, heavyset, with pronounced features and a bony nose. A face with character, as they say, and beauty isn't everything. There was something in his expression made me forego the usual scraping; mutely I offered him a chair. It's the only one in the house, so I stood before him.

"My lady Elin is sickening," he said without preamble. "The night air seems to be doing her harm. Each evening she slips away. I know this, though I cannot prove it, for she has eluded every guard I set upon her, and when I watch her myself I fare no better. Each morning she returns, further weakened. When I suggested she forego her nightly outings, she spoke these words in reply: 'Hold the sunbeam, hold the sea, chain the zephyr, but do not chain me.'"

He was quiet a moment, watching me closely. I caught myself bunching and unbunching my skirts in my hand, and forced myself to be still. But it was a nice jam! If I did not help him, I would lose my place in Roth Shan, and stars know there's not much further down to go from there. But if I did what I could for him and his lady wife—and that knot would take some untangling—I'd put myself square on the wrong side of the Church again. It was meddling in these matters that nearly ruined me before.

"I don't know that I'd be all that much help to you, Laird," I told him, though I had faint hope of excusing myself so easily. "I'm but a simple woman, far from blood and breeding . . ."

"We are all more than we appear," he said. That earned him a sharp look; he was certainly more than the devout son of the Church he played to. Not so funny, after all, that spot of washing that showed up so timely-like.

"Listen," he said, leaning forward, his eyes boring into mine. "There is much here at stake—Elin is sick, and winter comes early."

That reference took me a moment to catch, as I stared back at Rheagel and thought that he was as grim as his land . . . and then I understood. It's seldom, now, that any of the ancient links between land and ruler are preserved, and more seldom still that the nobles understand them. But in fierce and forsaken Roth Shan, they would long be kept alive.

There was suddenly little choice to the matter. "I'll do what I can," I said unhappily, "though you might be wishing otherwise when it's seen through. I don't guarantee success, nor rosy endings. And I can't work alone. It's a strange affair, and I'll need some strange sorts of help."

He nodded and stood. "My resources are at your disposal."

"Then I'll be at the manor tomorrow night; I've things to gather here." He nodded again. "Good night, sir," I said.

"Good night, mistress," he replied, and left, stooping a little to clear the lintel.

I didn't shut my eyes that night. I packed up a bag with clothes and toiletries, then spent the rest of the night dragging out all my old books. I have the letters, though I am

not quick with them, and by the time I finished my eyes were as puckered as raisins. My mind also was sore, from too many thoughts about the lady and her situation. Especially her rhyme—that was important, as Rheagel seemed to understand. Uncommon wise of him to pick it out like that to tell me. He has none of the eldritch abilities himself, but my best wager is that his mother was artful that way.

Since I wasn't certain what I was looking for, it was difficult to find, but by morning I held enough information to be satisfied. Then I slept. In the afternoon I woke, and traveled to the manor to be presented to Lady Elin.

She looked worse up close—or she had deteriorated since I saw her last. Her skin was all stretched out over her fine bones, and her bruised eyes darted ceaselessly about the room. Jumpy as a grasshopper she looked, and about as strong. She smiled thinly and greeted me.

"Good mistress, I welcome your company," she said with no hint of irony, though she surely knew I was her jailer and not her companion. "Such a fine day for pleasant conversation."

"As lovely as you are, my lady," I said, curtsying, "though it seems to have wearied you. You look tired."

"Truly?" she asked. "It must be the afternoon sun, so harsh on the skin. Do you know any way to defend against it, other than a veil?"

And so we discussed the benefits of red dock and of balsam root, and for each of my sharp questions she had a deft evasion. Grasshopper I called her, but she was closer to an eel.

As evening approached, she suggested it was time for bed. I agreed, though I had no intention of sleep. She began to unbraid her fair hair. As she did so she hummed a low tune, or perhaps sang it under her breath. It seemed to have words, but I could not make them out. As I listened, a drowsiness came over me, and a darkness seeped around the edges of my vision, until only Elin was clear. I watched as she finished brushing out her hair and went to the bed, but did not climb in. Instead she knelt and reached beneath it, drawing out a pair of sturdy boots. Then she turned straight to me, giving me a very level look, and the darkness closed in.

When I woke up, of course, it was daylight. I didn't need a kettle for my tea that morning; I could have brought the water to a boil just cupped in my hands, I was that angry. But soon it turned to befuddlement. I was sure the girl had known no witchery when she came to Roth Shan. Where had she learned it so quickly? I looked at the bed and there she was, sleeping like a child.

I went to the laird. He rose to greet me, with a question on his face.

"This is what I need," I told him, "to hold the sunbeam: a golden chalice filled with the clearest water in your land."

"You shall have it," he said.

The chalice was easily procured, but the water was more difficult; even the water in Roth Shan is muddy. When it was in my hands, I took it back to the lady's rooms for another afternoon of elusive conversation. I set the chalice on a western windowsill.

"So quickly time passes," remarked the lady as it grew

late. "It is time for bed again."

As she took down her hair, I moved to the chalice, where the last light of the setting sun was reflected in dancing lights on the surface of the water. I leaned down and set my lips to the water just as Elin began her spell. I felt the drowsiness, but the shock of cold water in my throat washed it away, and the reflected sun kept my vision bright.

I drank the last sip of water just as the sun disappeared completely and Elin finished her song. I sank to the floor and pretended sleep, until I heard her soft tread leave the room, and the door swing closed behind her. Then quick as I could, I was up and after her.

She walked silently down the hall and into the servant's wing, out a side door, and into the night countryside. She picked up speed as she moved farther from the manor. I had all I could do with following her. There was no way to stay hidden, but she never once looked back.

I had not had time to catch any sort of shawl, and I was mightily cold. She wore only a thin shift but was seemingly not bothered.

I began to worry about the terrain we were crossing. Some of it was familiar and some of it was half-familiar and some of it was altogether strange, though I had made extensive explorations of the area. We waded through a little stream, which I recognized, but the wetting of my feet did nothing to improve my chill.

Then we came to another stream, a deal wider than the first, and with no call to be there. Except for the size, it looked exactly like the one we had already crossed. Lady Elin strode through it as easily as she had the first, the water barely skimming her white ankles. But by the time I struggled through it, I was wet to the waist.

I ran to catch up with Elin, only to find her at the bank of a third river, this one three stones' throws wide. No such water exists in Roth Shan.

She stepped in, her feet making no ripples in the river's glassy surface. As before, she walked easily, never sinking below ankle depth. As I followed, the water deepened. I was in it to my neck before I had gone a quarter of the distance. I was not born with flippers; I cannot swim. So I stood and watched her step lightly through the water until she was completely taken by the night.

Then I made my way back, which was somehow a far longer journey than the coming had been. It was late morning when I arrived, footsore and muddy from head to toe, at the manor doors. Her ladyship was in bed and sound asleep.

"This is what I need," I told Laird Rheagel, "to hold the sea: one moonstone, ground fine."

"You shall have it," he said.

That evening I used the chalice to feign sleep, as before, and at night slipped out after the wandering lady. Also as before, I had no wrap. It wasn't enough that the Lady Elin was bound and determined to kill herself. No, she would have me catch my death as well. Wherever she had inherited her fey blood from, it had come with no sense. The Sight will never substitute for what any fool can see.

Then I was at the third river, the still black water. Elin made her usual careless crossing. I waited until she was gone from sight, then drew out the moonstone packet

Laird Rheagel had given me. I took the tiniest pinch of the powder and sprinkled it on the water.

Like the tides responding to the call of the moon, the river receded, parting on either side to make me a path. I walked forward, tossing a bee's thimbleful of moon dust ahead of me with every step.

When I came at last to the other side, I found myself in a country I had never seen at all. I stood at the foot of a high hill, black against the gray sky. The warm winds of late spring curled around me and ruffled the grasses. I glanced at the sky; as I had expected, the constellations had shifted. The Hunter, the Maiden, the Beast—they were gone. In their place shone the Crown, the Hand, the Tree—elven figures all.

I was shaking like a dry leaf. Oh yes, I was scared—this land was none to trespass in—but I was joyful too, in a fierce way. No feeblebrained witch-hunter could have followed the path I had navigated.

I put a foot on the hilly slope, gathered my sodden skirts, and began to climb. I was out of breath by the time I reached the crest, and I paused to rest. A good thing, for in the silence I caught the faint sound of voices. I crept forward and saw figures standing at the base of the next hill. Behind them, leading into the side of the hill, was a small opening. It spilled enough light to clearly illuminate one of the two figures: Lady Elin.

"No," she was saying, "no danger—none there has the skill to break the charm you gave me."

"Are you ready, then?" the other spoke. It was a man's voice, rich and musical. He was silhouetted against the bright opening, standing just inside the hill, and I could not see his face, but no mortal was ever built so tall and lithe.

"I am ready," she said. The elven man reached a hand toward her, and she stepped forward as if to take it. But although he moved not, all her reaching brought her only a hair's breadth from him, no closer. She cried out, a wail of sorrow and frustration.

"One more night," he said, dropping his hand. "One more night and the strong slow spells will be finally bound; the pattern will be entire; the crossing will be complete."

She made a reply, but I could not hear it; the wind had picked up. By the end of the elfs words, it was the force of a strong storm, whipping my hair across my face. As I watched the two, I saw that he was drifting away, or we were. In any case, the winds were blowing a wide rift of black water between us.

Before Elin could come on me, I turned and picked my way back down the hill and through the water, across the streams and to the manor doors. The lady never overtook me, but still she was there by the time I returned.

I went to Laird Rheagel. "This is what I need," I told him, "to chain the zephyr and your lady: one eagle's wing—and it will be the last thing I'm needing, for success or failure, tonight this ends."

"You shall have it," he said, "but mistress, bring me success."

I didn't bother joining Lady Elin at all that afternoon; I caught up on some much-needed sleep and went to her at sundown. She didn't look like she'd even noticed my presence or the lack of it. She was ashen white except for her

cheeks, which were flushed blood red, and her eyes, which were feverishly bright. She was burning herself up from the inside.

With the sunlit water I resisted her song of sleep, and followed her out into the night. This time I didn't notice the cold; I had all the heat of intense apprehension inside me.

I kept close behind Elin as we crossed the three rivers and came again to the twilight shore. Her pace quickened as we topped the high hill. On the next slope stood the elven doorway, and a man was waiting.

I began to run then, as fast as I could, nearly tripping over my skirts, but I caught her at the foot of the hill. She whirled to face me, her eyes lit with panic.

"Oh no," she whispered, her face crumpling, and then shouted out, "no, oh no no no!" She began to struggle like a wild thing, but she was very weak, and I held her easily.

"Lady," I said with pity, "you cannot make this crossing. It is killing you."

"It is the other world that is killing me," she cried passionately, "never this one. All my blood has called me here. Witch that you are, woman of wisdom, can you not see that this is my only chance at life?"

"You are no changeling," I told her. "You are an untaught sorceress, caught up in magic that far exceeds you. And you have duties, sacred bonds. . . . Lady that you are, life of the land, how can you forsake Roth Shan?"

"Roth Shan!" she laughed derisively. Her laugh was high and brittle, and seemed to contain the clinking of glasses. "Roth Shan is dead already!" She abruptly ceased fighting and collapsed at my feet. "Please," she said hoarsely. Her voice tore from the back of her throat, formed not from sound but from the pure emotion of desperation. "Please!"

I felt for her, for she was doomed. She had walked the elven lands, and there was something in her forever caught there. But however she denied it, Roth Shan was a part of her, and her soul would dissolve before those bonds did.

I looked up, glancing at the elf beside us. He had made no move during the whole struggle. He stood just inside the passage leading into the hill, framed in light, watching. He met my eyes.

He was clad in what seemed to be diamond-studded silk, dark blue or perhaps purple. He wore a silver circlet. His hair was night-black, catching the light from the doorway in a reflective blaze, and his eyes were starry bright. He had a bittersweet face, perfectly formed, with no human blemish to give the eye a respite. He smiled at me, a dark invitation. I trembled.

Elin, at my feet, reached up to clutch my elbow and bring my attention back to herself. She spared no glance for the elven lord. I wondered suddenly if she understood this land any less shallowly than she did Roth Shan. The elf's eyes were upon me, and I wondered further whom he had opened his borders for.

I fumbled under my belt and found the eagle's wing. As I withdrew it, Elin's eye fell upon it and she lunged upward, but her assault was frantic and clumsy. I evaded her and flung the wing to the ground.

Immediately the winds flared up, reaching gale force within seconds. The elven hill began to recede. The winds tangled my skirts around my legs and tore away Elin's inarticulate protests. The light from the hill disappeared into darkness; the wind died. Elin was silent.

I touched Lady Elin's shoulder gently and turned her about. She made no resistance, but followed me dumbly. The wide river was gone; we stood at the bank of the one small stream.

It was dawn when we reached the manor. Laird Rheagel was waiting for us. I drew Lady Elin into the hall, where she stood, white and silent, before the laird. She seemed to be looking at some point over his shoulder. Every line of her body was one of despair.

"The spell is broken," I said. "Roth Shan should recover now. But you will be wanting to put bars of cold steel across all of your windows and all of your doors."

Rheagel nodded. "Will she recover?" he asked, with an undertone to his voice that made me look more intently at him and notice the way he was gazing at his wife, as if her pain was his. But she stood like a dead thing and was not heeding.

From all I knew of similar cases, the truth was that she would probably not last out the week. I hesitated, watching them and the way they stood, and I hated to say it. Perhaps there was something more there to change the accounting: his will, maybe, and hers too, and not least that of this stubborn realm. Roth Shan is a grim, grudging land. But it is wild and proud, and there might be strength enough in Lady Elin to someday come to love that.

"In time," I said, "in much time . . . she may forgive."

He nodded, accepting what I had said and what I had not, and led the lady away. I went back to my cottage, to sleep for a week.

Then I began taking stock of all my possessions. Astonishing how quickly they multiply, those useless little bric-a-bracs. You'd think they breed. It took me days and days to sort them all out and pack them up.

It's not that the laird was ungenerous. He offered me handsome compensation and a permanent position at the manor. But I refused him. You see, I have been remembering the elven lord's smile, wondering if they have any washing to be done there beneath the Hollow Hills—and I know a good position when I see one, yes I do. Ω





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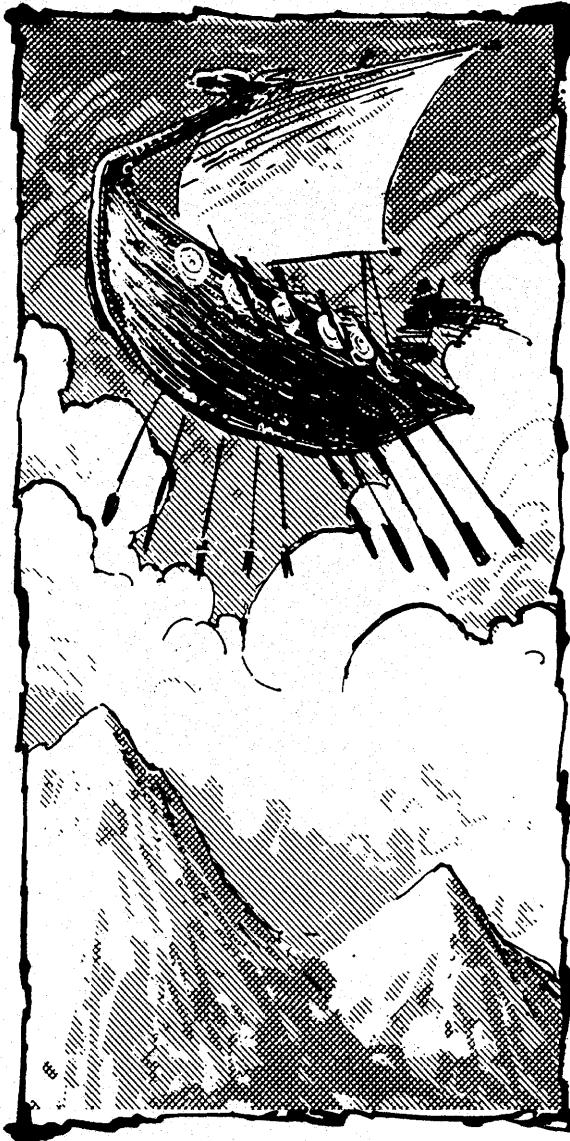
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# The Palladium Fantasy World

# Iribram

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## CHAPTER 8 THE SECRET PATH

### THE STORY SO FAR:

FINALLY RID OF HER TATTERS, JEN LOOKED EVERY INCH A WARRIOR OF CHAOS. WITH HER NEW Duds SEEMED TO COME A NEW ATTITUDE AS WELL. NOW WE CAME TO THE MATTER AT HAND, GETTING HER HOME.

WHICH PROVED NOT TO BE AS EASY AS I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

JEN, ACCORDING TO CHARLIE, THERE'S A GATE TO YOUR HOME IN THE SHELTERING DRAGON REGION.

HE SAYS PUSS HERE KNOWS A SECRET PATH.

HOME?  
MY HOME?

AYUP. IT STARTS RIGHT HERE, BUCKAROO.

YOU BETTER, BRING SOME LIGHT, THOUGH - IT'S A TAD MURKY.

OF COURSE YOUR HOME. THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT - GETTING YOU BACK.

YES, OF COURSE... MAH PLEASURE, LITTLE LADY.

IT WAS NICE MEETING YOU, MR. POIROT.

WILL THIS BE FAR?

MR. POIROT WAS SAYING THAT THIS IS REALITY. THE REAL REALITY.

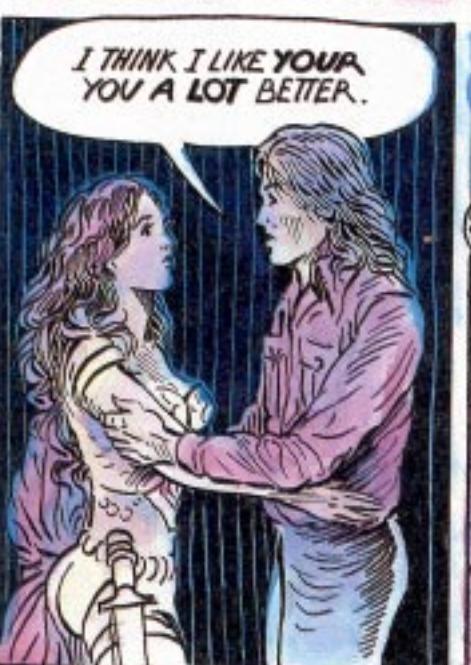
AND THERE ARE VERSIONS OF ALL OF US IN THIS REALITY.

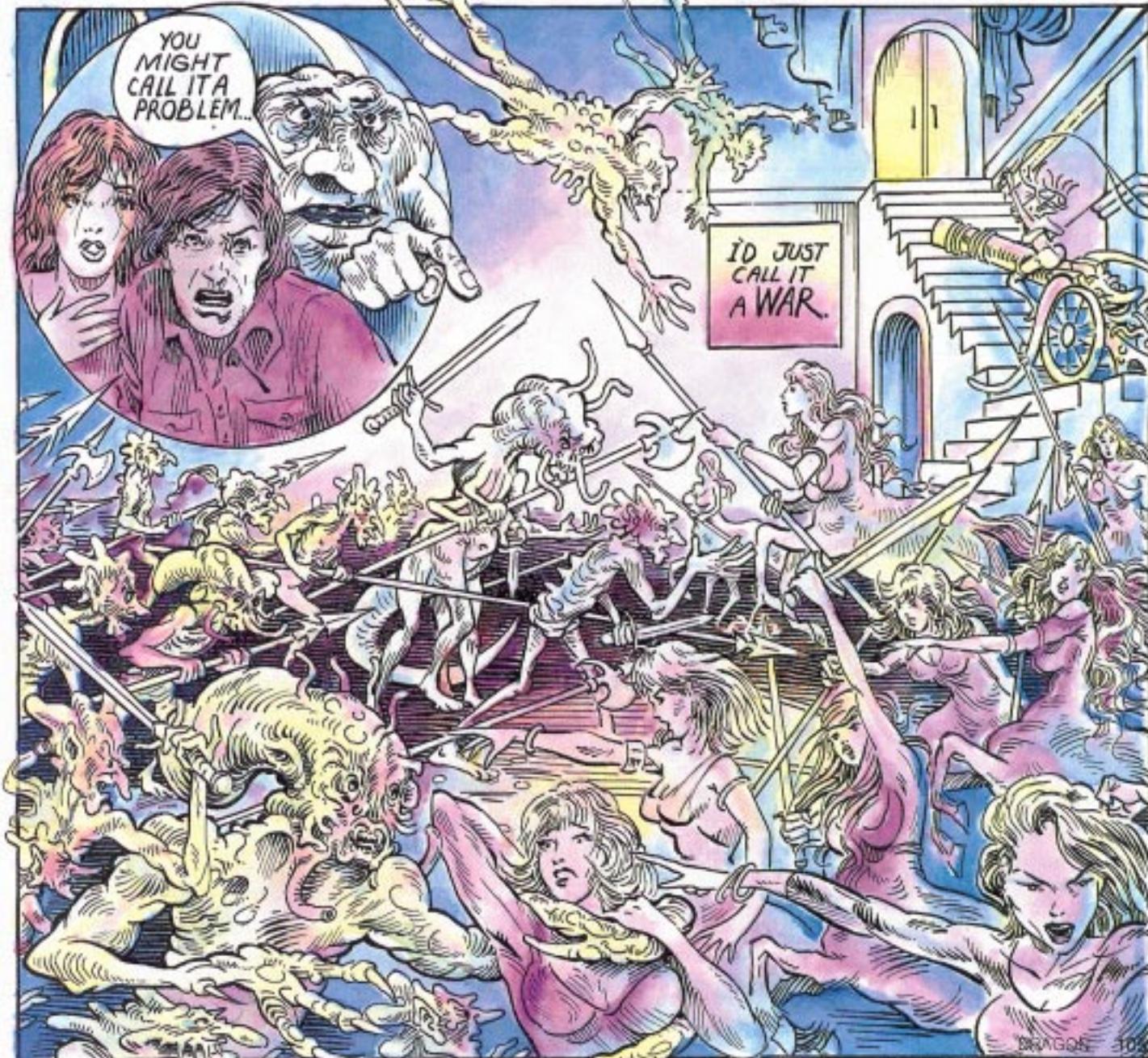
DOESN'T THAT MEAN THERE'S SOMEONE IN THIS WORLD WHO'S THE "REAL" ME?

I MEAN, HAVE YOU SEEN OR MET THIS OTHER ME?

ACE? DID YOU HEAR ME?

THAT'S ONE THEORY





NEXT: WAR ZONE

# Dragon's Mouth

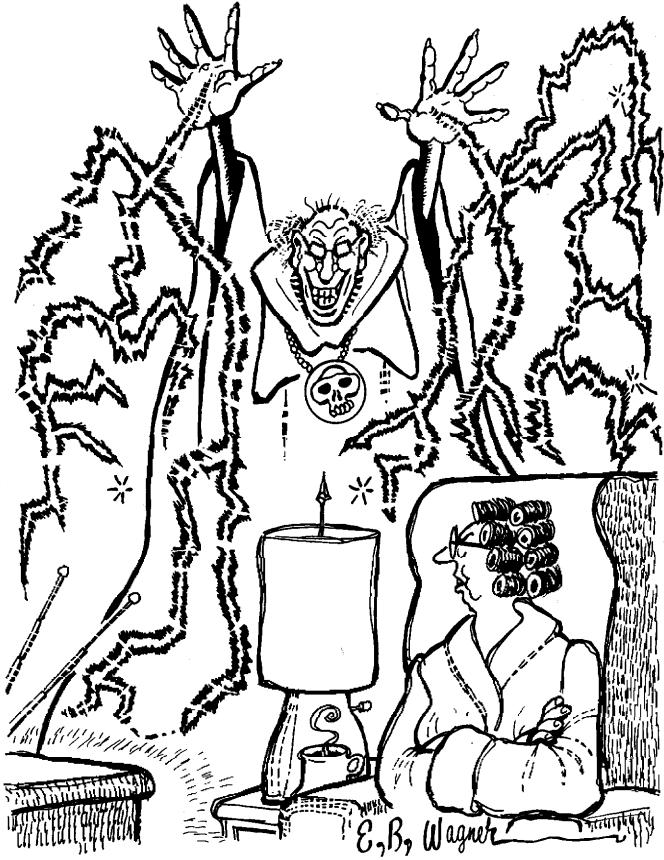


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"Very well . . . cross it out and let's try the next one."



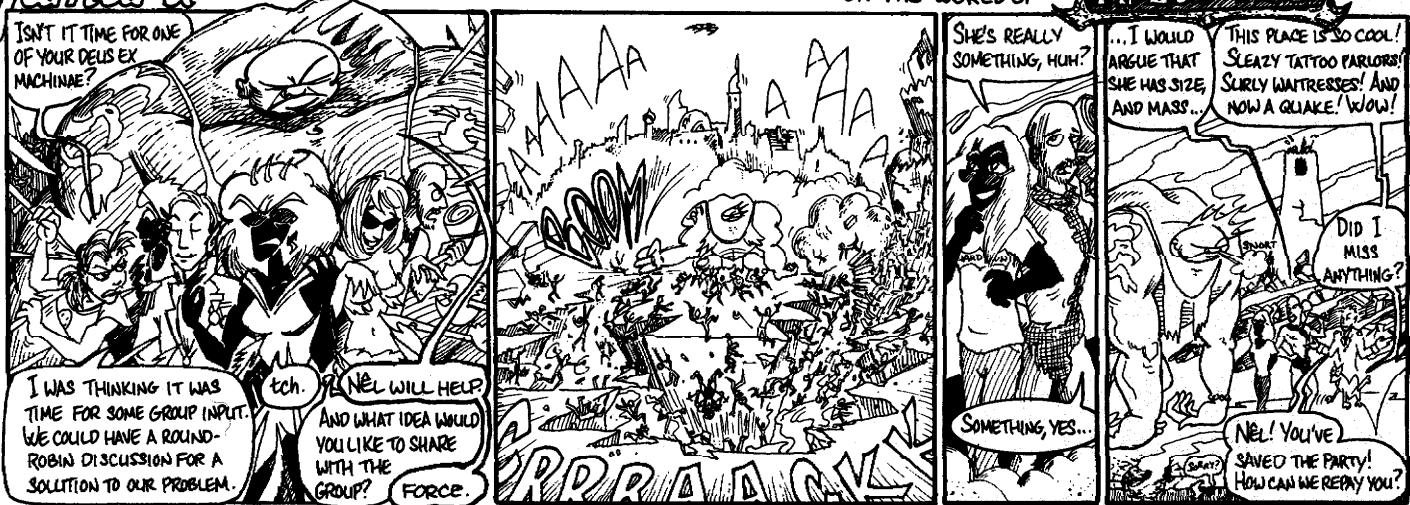
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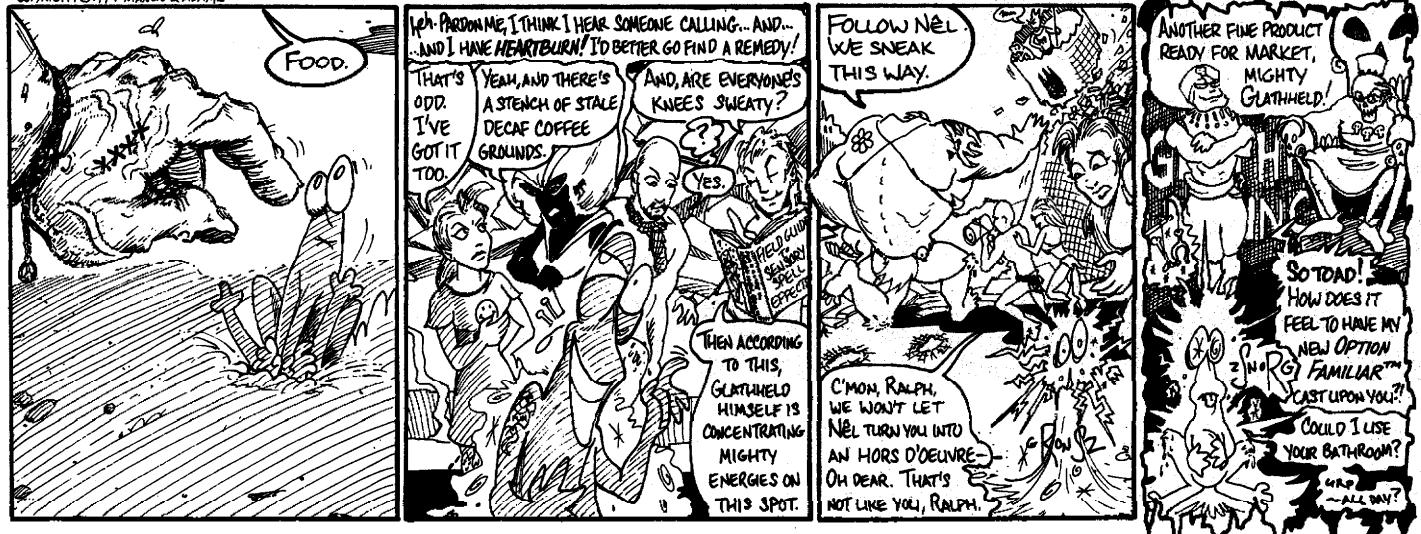
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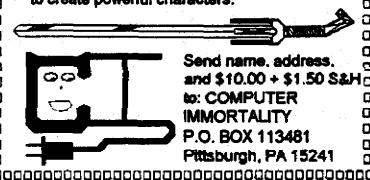
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Vampiress and Ghost (Fortress)

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### Reviews

#### Fortress Figures

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#### XL 25 Ghost

This lead figure can be used with any scale and is very simple—a sad-looking spirit rising from the ground in a small vortex, on a circular base. It looks like a sad version of Casper the Friendly Ghost. There is no flash and only a very slight mold line. My only complaint is the ridging

on the left "hand." The price of \$1.50 is very reasonable.

#### BR 002 Vampiress

This lead-free figure scales out to 28 mm. The female vampire is dressed in a long gown cinched at the waist by a wide belt with a diamond buckle. A high-necked, full-length cape secured by a chain clasp adds to the standard vampire look. Her left hand supports her cape, and her right hand is holding a very bulky dagger. The face definition is only fair, although the fangs do stand out from the other teeth. The hair shows some stranding. Priced at \$1.55, this piece would not

\*\*\*\*  
½

be my first choice for a purchase even though it fills a niche.

#### Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

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#### #30114 Sir Tarquine The Cruele \*\*\*\*

This is a 25-mm multi-piece kit representing mounted and unmounted versions of a knight. A lance provided as a separate piece plus a three-piece sprue containing a mace, a sheathed sword, and an unsheathed sword offer a variety of weapons. The heavy warhorse, measuring 36 mm from nose to rump, is unbarded. The reins and tack are ornately done, and the high back of a saddle is just visible behind the molded-on lower half of a knight's body. The mane has hairs visible and yet still looks thick; the tail falls realistically behind the horse. The animal is rearing slightly and appears to be snorting. There is flash between the front legs and in the area between the back legs as well as along the mold line in the chest. The tail needs some light cleaning, and the spot where the jaw, rein, and neck join has a thin layer of flash. The top half of the knight is armed with a shield and has an open hand to accept a weapon. The two halves have only a narrow gap that runs along the belt line and looks natural.

The standing knight, on a 19-mm square base, has a shield bearing an embossed dragon strapped on his back. Gauntleted hands, molded open to accept a weapon, are reaching back to strike a two-handed blow. His armor is front facing plate halves secured by straps over very detailed chain mail. The legs, feet, and arms are covered by overlapping plate with evident joints. A creased surcoat covers the upper half of the body and appears to be billowed out by a breeze. A round helmet topped by a dragon protects the knight's head, face, and neck.

If the flash had not been present in as much depth and over as much area as it was, this would have been a five-star

#### Miniatures' product ratings

- +
- ++
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Poor  
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Excellent

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ENGLAND

### #69-018 Ooralath, Creature of the Wyrm \*\*\*\*\*½

This creature is a part of the WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE\* line for White Wolves RPG. The figure, which looks like a cross between an insect, a ram, and a frog, is made of Ralidium and is scaled to work with the slightly larger figures of this line. The base is a 39-mm oval with a rough texture. The arms are molded separately and fit into well-done slots and holes. The figure is 68 mm long from jaw to tail and 30 mm tall in its hunched and running position. The body is covered by a large number of overlapping chitin plates covered with spikes. The mouth is beaklike, with plates and teeth evident. All four paws have talons. There is a lot of flash at the ends of the numerous spikes, and there is a serious mold line on the belly and the inside of the legs.

This creature could make an interesting AD&D® game monster as well as being a worthy creature for the WEREWOLF game. It is a multi-use figure that is interesting even at the price of \$4.75 each.

### #11-475 Lizard Men \*\*\*\*\*½

This set contains three AD&D game figures, two normal lizard men and a Lizard King, made of Ralidium and scaled to 25 mm. The two normal lizards are 37 mm tall, mounted on large ovals with marshy textures. Both bodies, devoid of clothing, have good muscle detail. One figure carries a club and has a closed mouth; the other is chewing and has a sword raised in the air. Each creature carries a shield on its left arm. The spinal ridges are free of flash except at the tips.

The Lizard King is slightly taller, almost 40 mm, and is mounted on a rough oval with a molded rock surface. The skin texture is rough and pebbled, with plates visible on the stomach and legs. The shield the King wields is larger and has more plates than those of his companions. He is armed with a large sword in hand and a shorter sword carried over the right shoulder in a belt. The taloned feet grip the rocks tightly, and the hand detail is clear. The open mouth shows some teeth, but the inside of the mouth has excess metal.

These figures could provide an interesting diversion for a low-level party, and could make an interesting ally for some nasty creature. I recommend this pack, especially at the reasonable price of \$6.50.



Sir Tarquine the Cruel (Thunderbolt)



Ooralath (Ral Partha)



Lizard Men (Ral Partha)



Ssagar and Saurian Watchdog (Ral Partha)



Borogon (Ral Partha)

### #09-002 Ssagar the Lizard Man and Saurian Watchdog \*\*\*\*\*<sup>1/2</sup>

This pack is part of the "Titans of Terror" series, a separate group of figures that were supposed to be part of a story line begun in the first Titan boxed set. It contains two figures scaled for 25 mm plus a separate weapon.

The Saurian Watchdog is mounted on an oval base with a surface texture of rocks and grass. The pebble-skinned lizard has an almost T-Rex head, including the needle teeth, and is 100 mm long. The legs end in three toes tipped with talons. A sharp spiral ridge is made up of a series of spikes. There also are two rows of plates on each side. It'd be great to have one of these trained for my store.

Ssagar is mounted on a grass-textured

oval with a couple of large plates. In comparison with the lizard men described above, the skin texture is the same, but without the belly plates; the spinal ridge line is more elaborate, and the teeth don't seem to be quite as sharp. Ssagar wears a loincloth dropping from a wide belt. A sword hangs from the belt, and a halberd is provided to be placed in his hands. An armor plate with spikes is held onto the right shoulder by a series of straps, and the right arm is armored. This lizard man is more than 48 mm tall, with a 40-mm tail.

This is an excellent addition to the lizard men set, and Ssagar makes an excellent king. This kit is highly recommended, especially because the figures are almost flash-free. The pack is priced at \$6.95.

### #09-001 Borogon, the Four-Armed Titan \*\*\*\*

This package contains one large humanoid monster, two arms, a huge spear, and an axe, all scaled to fit the 25-mm scale and cast in Ralidium. The base is an oval with a rock-and-grass textured top. The figure stands 60-mm tall on cloven hooves. The body is covered in textured fur. The skin, where visible, has a pebbled finish with a multitude of spikes. Muscle detail is slightly exaggerated, as befits a King Kong-type critter. Borogon is wearing no clothing or ornamentation except for skull earrings. All hands have three clawed fingers. The mouth shows tongue, teeth, and gums. A gorilla face is crowned by platelike brows. The two lower arms fit into slots, but a lot of trimming and filing will be necessary for a close fit. The weapons are slightly brittle, so care should be taken in removing the spear and axe from the sprue.

This figure has no direct translation to the AD&D game, but I could think of a few really nasty surprises for a party (two attacks each on two separate targets, with a high Strength bonus). This could be cheap entertainment at \$8.95, even after the work needed to fit the figure together fully and correctly.

#### Soldiers and Swords

25 Fayette St.  
Binghamton NY 13901

\*\*\*\*

#### FantaCity 002

As any role-playing gamer knows, the road to treasure often begins with a whisper or a map. For many adventurers, these tips are found in the cities and towns of the campaign. This set is part two of five pieces that form the basis for an entire town, and provide you with metal miniatures of the town's inhabitants in 25-mm scale.

The four buildings—a grist mill, a jail, a two-story inn, and an ordinary house—are represented by color floor plans printed on medium-thickness card stock. Walls are shown by perspective drawings, with windows open and thick wooden doors closed. The floors of the grist mill, jail, and the common room of the inn are depicted in a stone-block pattern; the floor plan of the rest of the inn (the remainder of the ground floor and the upper floor) and of the house are printed as wood-plank surfaces. All the floor plans are overprinted with 25-mm hexes to facilitate movement. The edges of two of the sheets contain accessory cutouts to enhance the buildings and provide hiding places or plot twists. Included are casks, desks, beds, tables, a chest, sacks, and a well.

The house is a four-room structure measuring 185 mm x 215 mm, counting the front and back entrances and the fireplace.

The jail is 190 mm wide by 250 mm long with torch holders on the walls, two cells with barred doors, an office with a

fireplace, and an undefined room whose purpose is left to the imagination. (Note, however, that an executioner is included with the figures.)

The grist mill is designed to be two stories high with one plate showing the bottom workings, including the grinding wheel, water wheel, conveyor, and supports. The second drawing shows the upper balcony and feed deck.

The inn is 253 mm wide and 390 mm long on the bottom floor with a common room (a huge open area including a bar and fire pit), a lower room, a privy, and a large dining area and private meeting room. The upstairs contains four rooms (you could expand this easily) and another bathroom. There is also a balcony with railing and torch holders on the wall. The rooms are obviously made to hold more than one person and would be easy to modify.

The miniatures are intended to be versatile. You can make them building-specific or use them for random encounters. The townsfolk all have oval bases and are in a variety of action poses. All the base undersides required some work to remove excess metal and insure that they stand levelly. If you have a Dremel tool use it for flattening the bases, since this metal dulls knife blades and fills files quickly. The figures included are:

1. The ugly bartender: This figure is



FantaCity (Soldiers and Swords)

almost a carbon copy of the bartender on the front of Avalon Hills TALES FROM THE FLOATING VAGABOND\* product covers. Imagine a 30-mm slumming Klingon with a huge beer belly, smoking a cigar stub. His eyebrows are ridged and his expression is noncommittal as he serves a glass with his left hand and hoists

bottle in his right. He is dressed in a pair of trousers, mid-shin combat boots and a too-small shirt that leaves his navel exposed. Detail is good, although a mold line runs along the right arm and is difficult to remove. There is some flash in the space between the extremities and the torso, and along the head.



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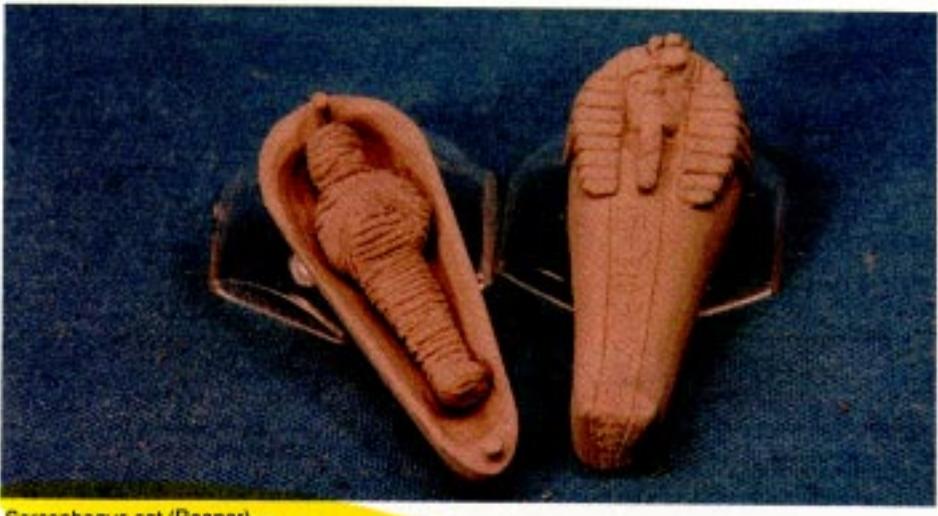
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Sarcophagus set (Reaper)



Familiar set (Reaper)

2. The town drunk: We've reviewed this figure before. Except for a little more flash this time around, it is not bad.

3. The bar wench: This girl is out fishing for tips. She is serving a mug with her right hand and swirling her dress in a high arc with her left hand. Her bare feet and chubby legs are exposed. Her tight-fitting peasant dress is cut low in the bodice. Her hair is tied back and away from her moon-shaped face with its large grin. Her features are very plain and slightly heavy. There was flash between her legs and the swirling skirt, and along the right arm. Be careful that you do not remove her earrings or frills as flash.

4. The gnome/dwarf: This figure is listed as a gnome in the set, but a dwarf in the company's catalog. I lean more toward an aboveground dwarf. He is dressed in long pants and high fur-trimmed boots. Both hands are covered in half-gloves and are holding a spear stuck outward. A heavy, long-sleeved coat is cinched by a wide belt. The gaunt, high-cheeked face is framed by long hair and a beard that falls to mid-thigh. His fur-ridged hat sits squarely on his head and he does not look amused. The only flash on this figure was between the arms and torso, and cleaned up easily. It is nice to see an unarmored dwarf.

5. The beggar: His hands, feet, and legs are wrapped in rags as he stumbles blindly along. His coat is tattered and bulges in the back as if this beggar is hunchbacked.

A blindfold covers both eyes and the upper part of the head while the lower half is covered by a ragged beard and scraggly hair. His right hand clutches a knobbed stick, while the left has a straight pole that he's apparently using to support himself. (The figure stands just as well without it, and I've decided I'm going to remove it because it's just too straight to be realistic.) There was flash along both feet and the right leg and between the arms and body. This is a figure with a lot of potential—he could be a lowly beggar, just as he appears to be, or he could be an assassin in disguise.

6. The sheriff: This man is dressed in fancy pantaloons and leggings, with his feet covered by low-cut shoes with square buckles. His long-sleeved shirt is frilled and puffed, sporting an elaborate collar and a badge of honor. His upper torso is covered by ribbed armor with a narrow belt. His left hand is cinched into his belt (or didn't fill totally), while the right arm supports a staff of office. The face has Spanish features and a sharply cut beard and mustache. A floppy hat with a feather sits atop slightly curly hair. There was flash between the body and the left arm that cleaned up quickly. This figure could easily serve as a Spanish Lord or a Conquistador officer.

7. The executioner: He is dressed and clothed in the garb of the traditional attitude-adjuster. His head is partially

concealed by a hood, with his eyes and a big grin visible. His feet are covered by shin-height soft boots, and a wide belt holds up what appears to be a very tight pair of slacks. Muscle detail is good, with individual veins visible in places. A huge twin-bladed axe with visible edges rests on the ground. The only faults I found were some flash between the axe handle and body, and the fact that the figure is too flat on the rear side and too narrow. It almost looked as if the master was laid on its back while it was still wet.

8. The blademaster: He could be any of the Three Musketeers, as he is that close to that classic figure type. His face is set in concentration as he wields a long rapier in his right hand and a short-bladed rapier in his left in an overhand cut, fighting and facing to his right. The only flash is under the chin and under the right arm. This figure could be used as a rogue or cavalier.

This set has no statistics for these characters, but the *Realms Magazine* that comes in the box does offer some scenarios for their use. This set is highly recommended, especially at the \$15.95 price. The only reason it didn't score higher on the ratings was the time involved in cleanup.

### Reaper Miniatures

1660 S. Stemmons  
Suite 220, LB11  
Lewisville TX 75067

\*\*\*\*

### 1274 Sarcophagus Set

This three-piece set is available in lead or pewter and is scaled for use with 25-mm figures. The sarcophagus consists of a non-decorated bottom half and an ornate top. The bottom has rough walls and large pegs at the head and foot that are used to line up and secure the top half. The top half is done in traditional Egyptian style with an oversized face, wrapped beard and hair, and hieroglyphics engraved from beard to feet. The third piece of the set is a tightly wrapped mummy that fits in the tomb. The corpse is 28 mm tall and has flat spots on its back. This is a non-movement piece, but you could replace the mummy with an "action" figure after the top is opened.

This piece is noteworthy for having no flash and requiring no special preparation before painting. The detail is not as crisp as it could be, but it's still a good buy at \$2.50 in lead or \$3.50 in pewter.

### 1460 Familiar Set

\*\*\*\*½

One of a wizard's most important possessions is his familiar. This set of five figures offers a few interesting additions to the available mix of wizards' pets. The set, scaled for 25 mm and available in lead or pewter, contains the following creatures:

1. A cat with its back arched high and its tail straight up. As a cat owner, I can testify that this is a legitimate and well-sculpted attack posture. Its ears are slightly laid back, and its mouth is open in



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Illusionist (Heartbreaker)



Dwarf Cavalryman with axe (Heartbreaker)

a hiss. Fur detail is good, if somewhat exaggerated. Standing 8 mm high at the arched back, this is either a large cat or a small bobcat (our 18-pound cat scales close to this size).

2. A horned owl that is slightly larger than a real one, but captures all the spirit of a live bird. Wing structure and feather detail is good, and a careful look allows you to see the claws sunk into the gnarled tree stump base. The wings are slightly thickened, but this is to allow for detail. If there is a weak point to this figure, it is the tree—or maybe it is really a rock formation?

3. An oversized bird that looks like it could be a very large crow or raven. The

feather detail almost looks more like hair, and the facial features are not well defined. This is the poorest figure of the group, but it would allow you to create your own bird.

4. An imp that is approximately 15 mm tall and is in a moving, half-crouched position. He is without clothing except for a loincloth and a strap that extends over his waist and chest. He is molded as if speaking, and his pointed ears are slightly off center, making it seem as though he is agitated. A tail extends from his rear and curls to the ground. A minor problem for me is that his legs are sculpted to be thinner and more animal-like than the legs of a biped.

5. A small demon, this bare-bottomed, bowlegged critter has a beard that falls to his twisted knees, a pair of horns, and a twisted, buck-toothed smile. The four toes on each foot are almost close enough together to be cloven. As a companion for an evil wizard, this one is a gem.

I highly recommend this set. None of the figures contains any significant flash or loose metal. Combined with other available packages, this can give you a large pool of figures to match the result of a wizard's roll for a familiar. The package costs \$2.50 in lead or \$3.50 in pewter and is well worth the price.

#### Heartbreaker

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Paoli PA 19301

#### Gamecraft

A16 Gardner's Row  
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ENGLAND

#### #344 Illusionist on Flying Carpet

\*\*\*\*\*½

This set consists of four pieces scaled slightly larger than 25 mm. The foundation is a square black slot base, while the carpet support is a nondescript tower of large rocks. A square tab matches an indented area in the underside of the carpet and provides a well-matched joint with no filling needed.

The carpet is 37 mm x 25 mm. The edges are fringed, and the inside surface is marked to resemble a Persian rug. Ever-decreasing design groups frame a center with a rearing dragon belching flames while being backdropped by the sun or the moon, depending on your choice. The bottom part of the carpet is undecorated and slightly pitted except at the end fringe. Detailing on the dragon is fair; wing veins and stomach plates are visible, but there are no other scales. No feet are visible, and the head and horns are very basic.

The illusionist could be either a human or a half-elf. His face is drawn and gaunt, with high cheekbones and a fierce scowl, and his hair streams out behind him. Some

sort of artifact is positioned on his right shoulder, while his left shoulder points straight into the wind. He is wearing loose trousers tucked into knee-high, fold-top soft boots, and a long-sleeved shirt. The shirt is open in front to expose the chest and is billowing along his arms and back as if windswept. A belt supports a short sword, a pouch, and a water jug or sack.

The posture of this figure has caused him to be known as the "surfing elf" around here. This is a nice figure, with no flash, and is going to be added to my carpet corps. The set retails for \$5.95 and fits in well with several game systems.

#### 0342 Dwarf Cavalryman w/Axe \*\*\*\*

The Dwarf Cavalryman is part of the EARTHDAWN® series of figures made of a lead-free substance. The figure comes in four pieces and is scaled slightly larger than 25 mm. The finished set consists of a sabertooth tiger and a dwarf rider. The dwarf rider is equipped with a cleaverlike axe in his right hand and a studded shield on his left arm. He is wearing heavy pants and fur-topped boots that reach to his knees. A heavy short-sleeved shirt is ballooned slightly in the back and along the arms. A belt supports a scabbard and two square pouches. A fur-crowned hat, such as the Mongols used to wear, rests solidly on his head. His beard drops to his waist, while his hair falls to his mid-back. His facial expression is neutral. There was no flash, mold lines did not interfere with detail, and cleanup was quick.

The sabertooth cat is almost a cross between a bear and a cat. The front left leg is thicker than you would expect, but much of that is "fur." The front right leg does not quite match up with its mark and will require some filling or filing. If you want to match the fur, apply epoxy or Squadron green putty, and when it starts to set, gently etch the fur in. The rear leg fits fine and lines up well. The torso is well proportioned and the detail in the fur is very good, but mold lines across the upper right back and flash on the stomach will require careful work to avoid damaging the figure while removing this extra lead.

Even considering the problems with the cat, I still plan to get five more of these units. The set can be used with a number of other RPGs, and it is nice to see some fast support for my ground dwarves. The kit retails for \$4.95, and is recommended for those who like dwarves.

If you have any questions or comments you can call me at (708) 336-0790 MWThFr 2-10 P.M. or SaSu 10 A.M.- 5 P.M. or write: c/o Friends Hobby Shop, 2411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085. Thank you for your support.

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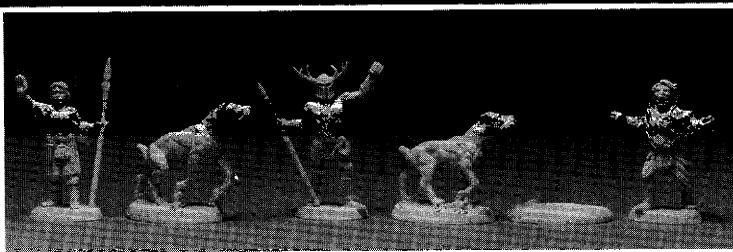
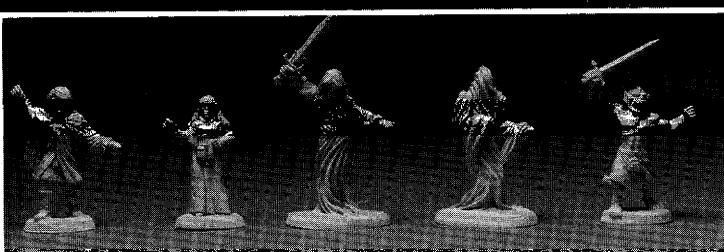
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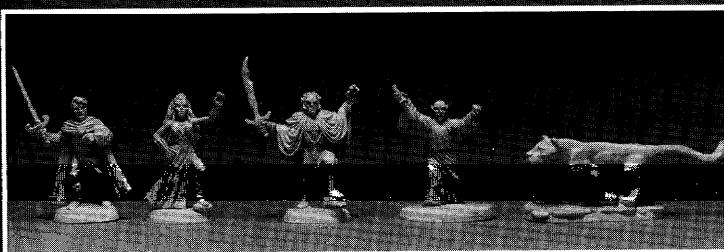
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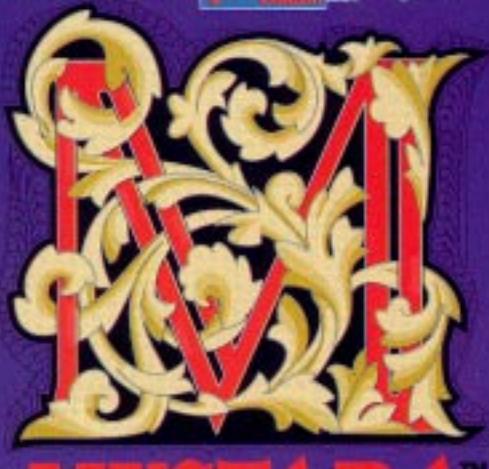
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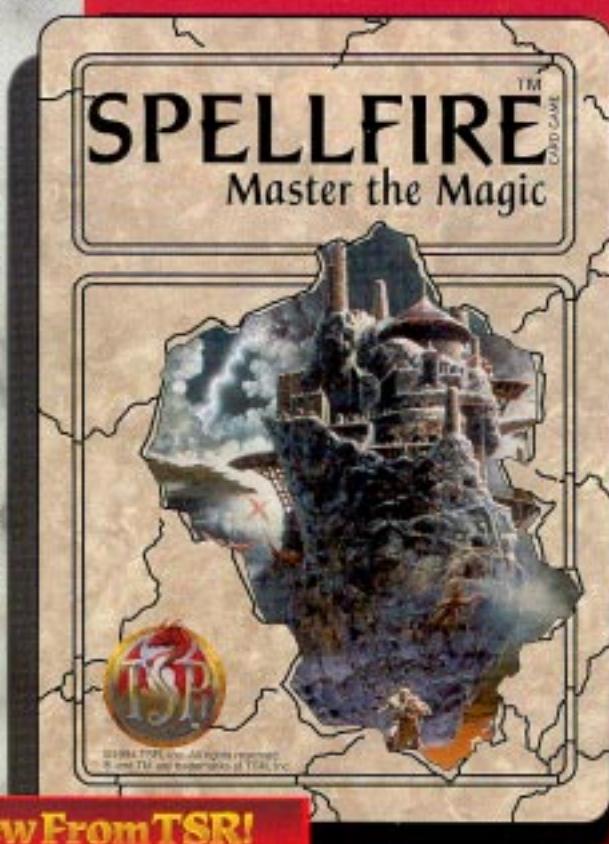
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